

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET

Date: 8th June 2016

1. **HEADING** Newcastle under Lyme Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021
- Submitted by:** Caroline Hallsworth
- Portfolio:** Safer Communities
- Ward(s) affected:** All

Purpose of the Report

This report brings forward the final version of Newcastle under Lyme's Homelessness Strategy for Cabinet approval and adoption.

Recommendations

To approve the adoption and implementation of the Homelessness Strategy 2016 –2021.

Reasons

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory duty on Council's to publish a new Homelessness Strategy. The Homelessness Strategy provides the framework for the delivery of our services designed to prevent homelessness and support those who may become homeless.

Newcastle's third Homelessness Strategy was for the period of 2010 to 2015 and has now reached its end date. Newcastle under Lyme's fourth Homelessness Strategy has been produced and having been through scrutiny and public consultation is ready for Cabinet approval.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to publish a Homelessness Strategy every five years. Newcastle's last Homelessness Strategy was published in 2010 and covered the period of 2010 to 2015.
- 1.2 Newcastle has had significant success in preventing homelessness over the past 5 years, however is starting to see an increase in the number of homelessness presentations in the Borough.
- 1.3 The draft Homelessness Strategy provides the framework for the delivery of our services designed to prevent homelessness and support those who become homeless over the next five years.
- 1.4 During 2015, the Council's Housing Strategy Team has undertaken a comprehensive review of the current Homelessness Strategy to determine:
- an up-to-date understanding of homelessness and housing need in Newcastle;
 - current and likely future levels of homelessness and homelessness trends;
 - services currently provided to prevent homelessness, to secure housing for homeless people and to provide them with support;

- the resources available to the Council, other statutory organisations and voluntary organisations to provide services for homeless people (acknowledging that the issue of homelessness requires involvement of a multiplicity of partner organisations, generally working together); and
 - gaps in provision.
- 1.5 Stakeholders have been consulted on the findings of the review, Homelessness Forum members have been briefed on the contents of the draft strategy and urged to take part in the consultation process post scrutiny.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Preventing and reducing homelessness remains a key priority for Newcastle, the proposed Strategic Priorities within this draft Strategy are:

Priority One – To prevent homelessness

Priority Two – Support Households into sustainable housing solutions

Priority Three – Work in partnership to address homelessness in Newcastle

- 2.2 Preventing homelessness is far more cost effective than dealing with its consequences, however there is growing evidence that the impact of welfare reform and downturn in the economy is putting increased pressure on housing advice and homelessness prevention services in the borough.

- Customers are facing difficulties in managing their income and sustaining affordable accommodation.
- There has also been a noted increase in cases of people presenting to services with complex needs (for example: those with mental health problems, addictions, negative behaviour, poor life skills).
- Year on year there has been a slight increase in the number of people accessing our rough sleepers' service.
- Finally there is recognition that the current accommodation options for young homeless people are not suitable and Newcastle no longer has any specific young person supported accommodation schemes operating in the borough.

These findings are evidenced by people approaching Newcastle Housing Advice and other homeless prevention services that operate in the Borough.

- 2.3 The new Homelessness Strategy builds on the success of the old strategy and proposes to continue to focus on prevention and early intervention, whilst undertaking targeted work on the identified issues above.
- 2.4 The draft Strategy takes into account good practice and Government guidance to assist the Councils in achieving the 'Gold Standard' in the delivery of homelessness services. The 'Gold Standard' has been developed by the Government and is based on the Government's Strategy for Homelessness 'Making Every Contact Count' 2012. In March 2016, Cabinet approved the Council's participation in working towards the 'Gold Standard'. Having a fit for purpose and up to date Homelessness Strategy is an essential part of this process.
- 2.5 How we will achieve our priorities are addressed in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. The action plan will be monitored by the Housing Strategy Team and the Homelessness

Forum. They will be responsible for ensuring the actions and outcomes contained in the action plan are implemented. There is flexibility within the action plan over the next five years, to allow for change dependent on future homelessness trends.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 No other options have been considered because there is a statutory duty to produce a Homelessness Strategy.

4. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 Addressing and preventing homelessness assists in meeting the Corporate Priorities to provide a Clean, Safe and Sustainable Borough, a Borough of Opportunity, a Healthy Active Community and Becoming a Co-operative Council by delivering high quality community driven services.

5. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 5.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to review homelessness in their area and develop a strategy to address its finding. The Act expects a 'joined up' approach to tackling homelessness by engaging statutory, non-statutory and voluntary agencies involved in homelessness. Adopting the Newcastle under Lyme Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2021 as a framework for shaping local service development ensures that the authority meets its legal duty.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty is part of the Equality Act 2010 and this Duty requires us as a public body to have 'due regard' to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act. It requires us to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'relevant protected characteristic' and people who don't.

During the development and production of this strategy equality issues have been considered. It is felt that this strategy is fair and works towards reducing any potential negative impacts on people with protected characteristics and increases inclusivity.

7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 There are no immediate financial implications as a result of this report; however, the successful implementation of the Homelessness Strategy will rely upon a range of capital and revenue funding. This will include the continued allocation of Council revenue and the annual homelessness grant from the DCLG.
- 7.2 To date the Council has received Homelessness grant funding each year from the DCLG. This funding has been confirmed at £124,672 for the 2016/2017 financial year, plus we have received indication of the proposed figures for the continuation of this funding for 2017 to 2019. The Homelessness grant is an extremely important allocation of funding as it is utilised to cover the current costs of the Borough's Homelessness prevention activities and the NHA service.
- 7.3 The Council is committed towards the No Second Night Out national approach, however there are specific gaps in provision in the borough, namely:

- The current availability of accommodation options to those who are sleeping rough in Newcastle who have either no local connection to Stoke on Trent or have already been denied access to provision in Stoke on Trent due to past behaviour.
- Outreach and engagement services in the Town Centre, which take place in the evenings. The Outreach Service currently operates by engaging with rough sleepers during the early hours of the morning, this is best practice and experience has shown that this is the best time to work with them. However, in recent months, in addition to the work that takes place in the mornings there has been an increasing presence of rough sleepers and beggars who are frequenting the Town Centre in the evenings, which has led to further issues for the Council.

7.4 The Council received £10,478.76 from the Shropshire and Staffordshire Homelessness Partnership during the financial year 2015/16 on the understanding that this money would be utilised towards the No Second Night Out approach, this provides £10,478.76 to take this approach forward.

7.5 The Strategy recognises that there is a national approach of utilising the private rented sector to meet the needs of many homeless households. The Council has recently commissioned a part time support service to enable people to access the private rented sector. Any extension of this service will incur costs that cannot be covered by the current budget of the Homelessness service.

7.6 The Council has committed to undertaking the first stages of the Homelessness Gold Standard, towards the end of the year. A further report will be made to EMT on the recommendations for improvements and the potential cost implications of these if these recommendations are decided to be actioned upon.

8. **Major Risks**

8.1 The risk of not having a Homelessness Strategy will result in the Council being open to legal challenge for failing to produce a mandatory document.

8.2 The risk of less funding being available for the delivery of homelessness services in the borough could have adverse effects on the levels of homelessness in Newcastle and although funds may not be available to deliver prevention services, the Council still has a statutory duty to assist those who are eligible and in priority need.

9. **Key Decision Information**

9.1 Endorsing and adopting the Homelessness Strategy will ensure that the Council has an up to date strategy and action plan in place to address the needs and gaps in provision in order to help those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

9.2 The strategy enables the emphasis on the prevention of homelessness to be at the forefront of Council thinking, whilst promoting value for money and cost effectiveness.

10. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

10.1 The draft Newcastle under Lyme Homelessness Strategy was considered by the Economic Development and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2015, they agreed for the draft strategy to forward for public consultation.

11. **List of Appendices**

11.1 Newcastle under Lyme Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 (hard copies available on request).

12. **Background Papers**

12.1 Newcastle under Lyme Homelessness Review 2015.