

Report to: **Overview & Scrutiny Panel**  
Date: **24 November 2016**  
Title: **HOMELESS STRATEGY 2017-2022 - PUBLIC CONSULTATION**  
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**  
Wards Affected: **all**  
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Referral of recommendation to Executive 1 December 2016

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. To note the content of the draft homeless strategy 2017-2022**
- 2. To recommend to Executive that the homeless strategy 2017-2022 goes out to public consultation from 1 December 2016 – 1 February 2017**

### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1. This report requests members to consider the draft South Hams & West Devon Homeless Strategy 2017-2022, in order that it can go out to public consultation, with a view to Full Council approval and adoption from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.
- 1.2. The strategy considers the current position of each Local Authority and the progress each has made towards tackling and preventing homelessness in each area. It sets out the ambition for the next 5 years to build on this work and links to corporate priorities. It is complimented by 4 priorities which were developed as part of informal consultation with other agencies and a Joint Member Task & Finish group.

The 4 priorities are

- (1) Understanding the true cost of homelessness
- (2) Access to Housing
- (3) Access to Services
- (4) Health & Wellbeing

- 1.3. The 4 priorities each have their own action plan which will be refreshed annually, with progress to date and new actions for approval by Council.
- 1.4. The public consultation is proposed to run from the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 to the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017. This allows all comments to be considered, ahead of anticipated adoption from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. It is a statutory requirement of the Homeless Act 2002 for each Local Authority to have a homeless strategy which reviews homelessness and causes locally and their plan to tackle and prevent homelessness in their area.
- 2.2. South Hams had a standalone homeless strategy which expired in 2013. Since that date it has become part of the corporate Connect Strategy (2011-2015) and progress against specific priorities of this strategy are reviewed in the draft Homeless Strategy. With the expiration of this Strategy, and ongoing work on "Our Plan" as an overarching Strategic Plan, it is timely to revisit a dedicated homeless strategy that underpins and informs some of the work this.

## **3. Outcomes/outputs**

- 3.1. Members are asked to consider the draft Homeless Strategy so that public consultation can commence over the winter months. The opportunity to consult with both service users, stakeholders and other professional bodies as well as being able to consider the views of all Members will be through an online survey, specific consultation events in both areas and further work with other partner organisations. Feedback from informal consultation, and the organisations who assisted us through setting the priorities has been encouraging, and we have been able to include their views as part of our Action Plan for 2017.
- 3.2. The Consultation will ask 5 questions
  - Have you read the strategy?
  - Are you an organisation or an individual?
  - Have you ever been homeless?
  - Are the 4 themes we have identified as priorities the right ones for our area?
  - Please give your comments on the strategy.

We will also ask questions regarding equality and diversity in order to understand whether our consultation method was representative of people in our area wherever possible.

## **4. Options available and consideration of risk**

- 4.1. It is a statutory requirement to have a Homeless Strategy as set out in the Homelessness Act 2002.

- 4.2. There may be changes required to this strategy as part of the Homeless Prevention Bill, however as the Authority already offers a prevention-led service rather than one that is reactive, the plans to tackle and prevent homelessness as contained in the strategy are designed to strengthen wherever possible the effective work of early intervention.

## 5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 That Panel recommend to Executive that the draft joint Homeless Strategy 2017-2022 goes out for public consultation.
- 5.2 That the existing Member Task & Finish group reconvenes in February 2017 to consider the responses to the Public Consultation before the final Strategy is considered by Executive for approval to full Council and adoption from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

## 6 Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	Statutory Requirement of the Homeless Act 2002
Financial	N	Although some of the Actions have a financial implication, at this stage consent is sought for public consultation. It is important to note that Local Authorities still receive a prevention of homelessness grant from central Government, and this is likely to remain at least until 2020. As most of the Actions are designed around homeless prevention and early intervention, the larger costs of temporary accommodation and rehousing will wherever possible be negated. This by far not only offers the best service for the customer but is the most efficient in terms of the Local Authority.
Risk	Y	By not having a Homeless Strategy the Council is in breach of the Homelessness Act 2002
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	As part of the consultation there will be an independent comprehensive equalities impact assessment. In between 2011- 2016 homeless applications by ethnic minority groups in South Hams equated to 5.3% of total applications (11/207). This is disproportionate with the percentage of ethnic minority groups which reside in the South Hams (1.7%). This trend will be closely monitored, and the Strategy as a whole will be rigorously assessed to ensure it adequately addresses the needs of all minority groups.

Safeguarding	Y	As the Homeless Strategy concerns work with very vulnerable people and one of the priorities is around Health and Wellbeing the corporate safeguarding policy will underpin the work of officers who regularly work with homeless households.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	Consultees of this strategy will be Devon & Cornwall Police and the Council's Community Safety Officer. The Police have already been consulted during the informal process and contributed to the action plan.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		The Consultation will seek opinions from the Community and professionals alike. The prime concern for the Strategy is around tackling and preventing homelessness which in turn is designed around improving the health and wellbeing of people living in the area.
Other implications		

### **Supporting Information**

#### **Appendices:**

Draft Homeless Strategy 2017- 2022

Action Plan 2017-2018

Homeless Evidence Base South Hams & West Devon

#### **Background Papers:**