

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **9 March 2017**
Title: **Homelessness Strategy 2017-2022**
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 Full Council

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Recommendations:

1. That the Executive recommend to Full Council the adoption of the Homelessness Strategy 2017-2022 and the 2017 Action Plan, with effect from the 1st April 2017
2. That the joint Member task and finish group is retained as a Homeless Strategy Monitoring group.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Members will recall the report of the 1st December 2016 when the draft 5 year homelessness strategy was recommended to Executive by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel to go out to public consultation.
- 1.2. The public consultation closed on the 13th February 2017. Members are now asked to recommend to full Council approval of the strategy which sets out how both Council's will tackle homelessness within the next 5 years.

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

its causes locally, and the plan to tackle and prevent homelessness in their area. It is also a requirement that the Authority will consult with the public or Local Authorities, voluntary organisations or other as they consider appropriate.

- 2.2. South Ham previously had a standalone Homelessness Strategy which expired in 2013. Since then it has used the Connect Strategy (2011-2015) as the vehicle for specific priorities around tackling homelessness in the District. With the expiration of this Strategy, and ongoing work on "Our Plan" as an overarching Strategic Plan, it is timely to revisit a dedicated homelessness strategy that underpins and informs some of this work.
- 2.3. The draft strategy was produced by a joint member task and finish group in consultation with relevant partners who were able to input to the priorities and action plan prior to public consultation. The Public consultation was open for 2 months and took the form of awareness raising events at high footfall areas in both West Devon and South Hams, an online survey, social media campaign, press releases, and focus groups with rough sleepers, email bulletins and postcards as well as the Member Bulletin and an email to every Town & Parish Clerk. We received 38 online submissions (summary results appendix 3) spoke to 170 members of the public and handed out 216 postcards. 5 former and current rough sleepers also spoke to us at the focus group meeting.
- 2.4. The results of the public consultation were broadly positive. Comments we received are included as appendix 4 to this report and where appropriate these are responded to. As a result of this we have not made any changes to the strategy. We have included information on the community house building fund and referenced the housing white paper, although not in any detail at this stage.
- 2.5. The joint Member Task & Finish Group has been a positive addition to the formulation of this strategy and the report author wishes to extend her thanks to the Members included. It is a secondary recommendation of this report that the Task and Finish group remains in operation as a Homeless Strategy Monitoring group who will meet quarterly to discuss progress around the action plan.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1. Members of the Executive Committee are asked to recommend the adoption of the 5 year South Hams & West Devon Homeless Strategy to full Council.
- 3.2. Officers will report back annually on progress against the Action Plan, and to agree the actions for the following year.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1. It is a statutory requirement to have a Homeless Strategy.
- 4.2. There may be changes required to this strategy as part of the Homeless Prevention Bill. This Authority already offers a prevention-led service rather than one that is reactive, so is in a strong position to respond to any change in legislation. Furthermore the plans to tackle and prevent homelessness, as contained in the strategy, are designed to strengthen wherever possible the effective work of early intervention.

4.3. Some of the actions may require funding. It is important to note that Local Authorities still receive a prevention of homeless grant from central Government. In South Hams this is for £83,594, and this is likely to remain at least until 2020. In addition if the Homeless Reduction Bill becomes legislation Local Authorities will receive new burdens funding for homeless prevention activity. We are not making any request for additional funding to deliver this strategy.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. That Members of the Executive recommend to full Council the adoption of the Homelessness Strategy 2017-2022 and agree the 2017 Action Plan.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	It is a statutory requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002 to have a strategy, and that the Authority " <i>shall consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate</i> " (Homelessness Act 2002 part 3)
Financial	Y	No additional funding is sought at this time. It is important to note that Local Authorities still receive a prevention of homeless grant from central Government of £83,594, 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 homelessness strategy this Authority is in breach of the Homelessness Act 2002.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	This strategy has been comprehensively equality impact assessed and there are no concerns. The public consultation was also reflective of the local demographic.

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	Devon & Cornwall Police have contributed to the design of this strategy and will remain significant partners during the delivery of relevant actions in the action plan.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	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:

Appendix 1 South Hams & West Devon Homelessness Strategy 2017 – 2022

Appendix 2 South Hams & West Devon Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2017/18

Appendix 3 Summary of the Consultation online responses

Appendix 4 Detailed responses to the comments on the online survey

Appendix 5 Information on other consultation.

Background Papers:

None