

**CABINET**

**4<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

**Worcestershire Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Shirley Webb
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	Not Applicable

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all housing authorities must have a homelessness strategy in place which is based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district.
- 1.2 The Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership produced a high level Housing Partnership Plan in 2017, and a report detailing this came to the committee in 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness contained in Appendix 1 expands on the themes contained in the 2017 plan, and sets out how councils across Worcestershire prevent and respond to homelessness.
- 1.3 The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 means that the Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness needs to be updated in light of these latest legislative changes.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Cabinet is asked to note:**

- 2.1 the Worcestershire Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness.
- 2.2 that this document expands on previously agreed high level actions within the Housing Partnership Plan that relate to tackling homelessness.
- 2.3 that this document will need to be updated and renamed within the next 12 months to ensure compliance with the new national Rough Sleeping Strategy with amendments being made at officer level.

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**3. KEY ISSUES**

**Financial Implications**

3.1 None

**Legal Implications**

3.2 Producing an up to date homelessness strategy is a legal requirement under the homelessness legislation.

**Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.3 In 2017 the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership developed their first Housing Partnership Plan (HPP). This is the overarching document which sets out Worcestershire's combined strategic direction for housing including homelessness.
- 3.4 The HPP was subject to a 10 week public consultation ending on 31st December 2016 and committee endorsed the HPP in April 2017.
- 3.5 Many of the high level actions within the HPP and the projects/proposals developed to achieve them relate either directly or indirectly to the prevention of homelessness.
- 3.6 The conclusions and recommendations of the 2016 Worcestershire Homelessness Review fed directly into the development of the HPP. The review was a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness across the County, developed by analysing homelessness data and the views of customers and partner organisations.
- 3.7 Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district.
- 3.8 The strategy must set out the local authority's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.
- 3.9 The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act which came into force on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 and the new Homelessness Code of Guidance developed by Government to assist Local Authorities to implement the Act has subsequently placed further requirements on Authorities strategic response to preventing homelessness.

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- 3.10 The Act strengthens statutory duties to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants, including those who do not have priority need or may be considered intentionally homeless. The Act also creates a new duty on certain public authorities to refer users of their services who are threatened with homelessness to a housing authority of their choice, which enables earlier identification of people at risk of becoming homeless through their interactions with other services.
- 3.11 The Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness has been written to expand on the high level actions within the HPP and in response to the new duties of the HRA (which were not known in as much detail at the time of developing the HPP).
- 3.12 It is also recognised that to be effective, a strategic homelessness prevention response will need to be developed and owned jointly with partners who will be responsible for its delivery. This document will now provide an opportunity to develop an effective implementation plan, with partners, to help ensure that the objectives set out in the homelessness strategy are achieved.
- 3.13 The Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness 2018-21 was publicly available for consultation from 24<sup>th</sup> April until 19<sup>th</sup> June 2018. A countywide Stakeholder event was also held at Wyre Forest District Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018.
- 3.14 On 13<sup>th</sup> August 2018, the Government published a Rough Sleeping Strategy with the aim of supporting everyone off the streets and into a home, and to end rough sleeping entirely by 2027.
- 3.15 Local Authorities have been directed to update their homeless strategies in light of this document and rebrand it as a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy by the end of 2019.
- 3.16 Whilst it is anticipated that some amendments to Worcestershire's homelessness strategy will need to be made, much of the national strategy is already encompassed within the document, so it is proposed those changes can therefore be made at officer level, rather than returning to the decision making process again at each district council.

**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.17 These are covered in the Equality Impact Assessment carried out for the original HPP.

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**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

There are no risks identified.

**5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Worcestershire’s Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness 2019/20

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**None**

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