

To: City Executive Board

Date: 12th September 2012

Report of: Head of Housing

Title of Report: DRAFT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2013 TO 2018

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To seek approval to consult on the draft Homelessness Strategy Consultation Document 2013-18

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Cllr Scott Seamans

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan, Housing Strategy 2012-15,

Recommendation(s): That the draft Homelessness Strategy Consultation Document 2013 to 2018 as attached at Appendix 1 is approved for public consultation.

Appendices to report:

- 1) Draft Homelessness Strategy Consultation Document 2013 to 2018.
- 2) Risk Register
- 3) Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Background

1. Oxford City Council has a duty to carry out a review of homelessness in the area and to publish a specific Homelessness Strategy to meet needs identified including
 - Addressing the causes of homelessness
 - Introducing initiatives to prevent homelessness wherever possible
 - Securing sufficient accommodation for homeless people or those who may become homeless
 - Ensuring appropriate support to prevent repeat homelessness

The existing Homelessness Strategy comes to an end in 2013

2. Between April and July 2012 a review of data and statistics was undertaken to produce an evidence base which has informed the development of the draft Homelessness Strategy. This includes analysis of housing needs, wider causes and trends in statutory homelessness over the last 5 years.
3. A Homeless Review 2012 has also been undertaken with partners and service providers. This has included past performance, gap analysis, current and future issues and, again, has supported the development of the Homelessness Strategy. Consultation Document.
4. The document has also taken account of emerging Government guidance on homelessness and housing needs. This includes a Government consultation document issued in relation to discharge of homelessness duty in the private rented sector and suitability of accommodation on 31 May 2012. It has also taken into account guidance on allocations policies which may impact on homelessness strategy. Any policy issues arising from final guidance on discharge of duty/suitability of accommodation and the allocations review will be reported to Council at a later date.
5. This report brings forward a draft Homelessness Strategy as a Consultation Document for approval which is attached as Appendix 1. It is planned that consultation will take place in September and October 2012

The new draft Homelessness Strategy

7. Much has been achieved since the last Homelessness Strategy was produced in 2008 – particularly more work preventing homelessness and less use of temporary accommodation. However, homelessness still exists and the challenge for the future appears even greater than before due to:
 - Demand for housing outstripping supply
 - Difficulties for vulnerable people and those on low incomes/benefits in accessing suitable, affordable, available housing
 - Pressures on household incomes in the current and future economic climate – including welfare benefit reform
 - Difficulty in meeting needs of households with more complex needs
 - The need to tackle the underlying issues of those facing homelessness and the need to act early
 - Communications, knowledge and managing expectations
8. Specific challenges to Oxford City Council in developing the new Homelessness Strategy include:
 - National policy issues and their local impacts
 - Seeking more prevention solutions

- Securing sufficient and appropriate accommodation to meet statutory obligations – including developing sustainable solutions in the private rented sector
- Dealing with rough sleeping including the impact of No Second Night Out and moves towards non accommodation based support
- Managing the resource issues in preventing and responding to homelessness

9, The goals of the draft Homelessness Strategy 2013 to 2018 are:

- Early intervention to prevent homelessness before a crisis point is reached
- Provision of appropriate accommodation and support if crisis occurs
- Prevention of repeated homelessness

10. If the draft Homelessness Strategy Document is approved for consultation, public consultation will begin as soon as possible after 5th September. Consultation will be carried out via e-consult and focus groups. Additionally, stakeholders and residents will be invited to comment via newsletters and direct contact,

Groups to be consulted include;

- Housing Associations
- Oxford Register of Affordable Housing members
- Homelessness network
- Oxford Residents
- Elected Members

11. Public consultation will commence in September following the City Executive Board meeting and end on the 31st October 2012. Any necessary changes will be incorporated in the Strategy and a detailed Action Plan will be developed to deliver solutions and improvements. The revised Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan will be presented to the City Executive Board at their meeting on the 12th December 2012. If the Board are content with the final draft Homelessness Strategy, then a recommendation for its adoption will be made to the meeting of Full Council in December 2012.

Wider impacts

12. The Homelessness Strategy will contribute to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan objective 'Meeting Housing Needs'. The corporate performance measure is to reduce the number of households in Oxford in temporary accommodation.

13. **Risk** - A risk register is attached at appendix 2.

14. **Environmental Impact** - The Draft Homelessness Strategy Consultation Document 2013 to 2018 does not have any explicit environmental impacts.
15. **Equalities Impact** - An initial equality impact assessment is attached at appendix 3. The Homelessness Strategy is very specifically targeted at meeting the housing needs of the most vulnerable people in Oxford and as such no adverse impacts on any equalities group are expected as a result of this strategy.
16. **Financial implications** - Homelessness has significant financial implications for the council. The authority's 2012/13 net Housing Needs budget that covers a variety of support initiatives dealing with Homelessness and its wider issues amounts to a £2.7m. Whilst the implications of this particular report does not initially have any financial implications the strategic priorities and options that emanate from the consultation will potentially have a bearing on the Council's future budgetary provision in this area. As stated this report does not have any financial implications at this stage. The aims of the Homelessness Strategy are to prevent homelessness and thus help minimise the costs of temporary accommodation. The Action Plan that will support the final Homelessness Strategy most probably will contain financial implications that will need to be considered by CEB and Council in December 2012
17. **Legal Implications** - The Local Government Act 2003 requires local housing authorities to have in place a Homelessness Strategy for the district.

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List of background papers:
Homelessness Strategy Evidence Base 2012
Homelessness Stakeholder Review 2012

Version number: 1

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