Report of[x1]**: Head Community Housing and Community Development**

To[x2]**: City Executive Board/Council**

Date[x3]**: 11/30 June 2008**   **Item No**[EM4]**:**

Title of Report [x5]**: Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013**

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report[x6]: This report presents the Homelessness Strategy 2008- and seeks approval publication.

Key decision[x7]**: no**

Risk[BL8]**:**

Board Member[x9]**: Cllr Ed Turner**

Report Approved by: [EM10] Jeremy King (Legal) and Suzan Smart (Finance).

Policy Framework[x11]**: Housing Strategy**

Recommendation(s)[x12]**: That Council be recommended to adopt the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13.**

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1. The Homelessness Strategy sets out the aims and objectives for homelessness prevention services provided by the Council and its key partners. It is a follow-on document from the existing Homelessness Strategy 2003-08.

2. Progress with the Homelessness Strategy (2003-08) action plan has been excellent and the Government has named the Council 'Regional Homelessness Champions' in 2007/08. Achievements are outlined in the new strategy in Appendix 3. Principal outcomes for each objective from this strategy have been:

2.1. Achieve a 40% reduction in homelessness acceptances by 2008: reduced by >50% by 2007/08 year end.

2.2. Reduce the average time spent by homeless households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2008: average time in temporary accommodation reduced by 18% to 2006/07. However the number of households in temporary accommodations has reduced by nearly 50% to 496 at year end 2007/08 and the Council will meet the 2010 50% reduction target ahead of schedule during 2008/09.

2.3. Increase the current number of homes available to meet housing need by 50 units each year from 2004: 610 new affordable homes provided in the city 2004/05 to 2007/08 exceeding this by a significant margin.

2.4. Reduce the cost of homelessness over the life of this strategy from 2004: Spend on temporary accommodation has reduced significantly in line with level of use.

2.5. End the use of B&B for families with children except in emergency: B&B used only in an emergency for any client group.

2.6. Reduce single homelessness and keep levels of rough sleeping to two thirds below level recorded in 1998 or lower: by the same measure rough sleeping has reduced from a count of 52 in 1998 to 13 (March 2008).

2.7. Reduce levels of repeat homelessness: Recorded repeat homelessness in 2006/07 was 1 case. Target for 2007/08 is 0 which was achieved.

2.8. Reduce levels of homelessness against main causes: Alongside overall reductions in levels of homelessness acceptances there have been notable reductions in the proportions of the main causes. 'Family and friend exclusions' has reduced from 43% to 36% and 'loss of private rented home' from 24% to 15%.

2.9. Reduce inappropriate use of Temporary Accommodation: B&B use reduced to emergency only, temporary accommodation remodeleld to self-contianed units and hostels subject to significant redevelopment.

2.10. Significantly improve services for homeless people by 2008: New Housing Options prevention-based service introduced to great success.

2.11. Provide a strategic framework for services to homeless people by March 2004: Housing and homelessness strategies monitored and reviewed, new strategies for BME and older persons produced and housing and homelessness are key corporate priorities.

3. The proposed vision, aims and objectives of this new Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 are:

Vision

The long-term vision for preventing homelessness in the city is to create choice by increasing opportunities for housing, training and employment and to realise the potential of people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

Aims

The aims of this Homelessness Strategy are to:

➢ Prevent homelessness from occurring.
➢ Reduce the impact of homelessness on people's lives.
➢ Ensure homelessness services provided in the city:
  o Are of a high quality;
  o Meet the needs of vulnerable people;
  o Reflect the city's diverse population;
  o Are delivered in partnership, and;
  o Offer value for money.

Objectives

The objectives of the Homelessness Strategy 2008 to 2013 are to:

1. Increase the range of housing options and services available to prevent homelessness.
2. Reduce the numbers of homeless people against key targets.
3. Support families in housing need to prevent homelessness.
4. Support rough sleepers into settled accommodation and develop clear pathways into independent homes, training and employment.
5. Support vulnerable young people in housing need to prevent homelessness.
6. Improve housing options services.
7. Identify and address the specific housing needs of different groups in the community who are at risk of homelessness.
8. Ensure housing options services offer value for money.

4. Wide ranging consultation has already taken place to inform the development of this Homelessness Strategy (along side the Housing strategy 2008-11). This is outlined in detail in section 3 of the draft. The main consultation activities to date have been:

• Resident questionnaire via the City Council's Talkback Panel.
• Service user questionnaires for people in temporary accommodation, users of homelessness and housing options services and Council and RSL (Registered Social Landlord) tenants including those on the waiting list.
• Questionnaires to partner organisations (RSLs, voluntary sector, etc).

- Focus groups (service users, Community Housing staff and managers and partner organisations).
- Meetings with members.
- Stakeholder conference.

5. Key findings were:

5.1. The main areas of concern for housing in Oxford were:

- High house prices and rents
- Lack of affordable rented housing for families and singles & couples.
- Long waiting lists for affordable rented homes.
- Street homelessness or rough sleeping.

5.2. Peoples priorities for addressing these problems were:

➢ Build more family sized (3+ bedrooms) and smaller (1 or 2 bedrooms) homes to meet demand.
➢ Build new homes in or immediately around the City, and;
➢ Build more homes away from the City in surrounding towns.
➢ The responses for the latter two options varied between respondent type with the Talkback Panel opting, by a very slight margin only (1%), in favour of 'away from the City', and service users opting by a large margin for 'in or near the City'.

5.3. Specific issues raised by respondents included:

➢ More and better housing services for young people.
➢ Affordability of private rented housing for those in work.
➢ Ensure there are good links between housing and support for vulnerable people.
➢ The condition of housing (public or private sector).

6. These findings have directly informed the Homelessness Strategy aims and objectives and action plan.

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Background papers[x14]:
Homelessness Strategy 2008-13.