

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Corporate Director for People
to
Cabinet
on
18 March 2014

Report prepared by: Jacqui Lansley, Head of Procurement,
Commissioning and Housing

The Southend-on-Sea Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-17

Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee
Executive Councillor -
Councillor A Moring

A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To outline the contents of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-2017 which reviews the current homelessness situation in Southend-on-Sea and sets out the Council and partners approach to tackling the issue.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet endorses the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-17 for publication.
- 2.2 That an annual report on progress in achieving the aims and actions of the strategy and setting out proposed actions for the year ahead is produced and reported back to Cabinet 12 months after implementation.

3. Background

- 3.1 In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002 the Council has a statutory duty to produce a Homelessness Strategy which sets out how homelessness will be prevented in the town.
- 3.2 The current Homelessness Prevention Strategy (2012-14) has come to the end of its applicability and as summarised in part 2 of the new strategy all of the actions included within it have been achieved or will be included in the new strategy where it is an ongoing project.
- 3.3 The Southend-on-Sea Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-17 (**Appendix 1**) proposes 5 key aims to focus efforts on preventing & reducing homelessness and associated negative impacts in the town:
1. Prevent and avoid Homelessness
 2. Minimise rough sleeping

3. Improve health and wellbeing outcomes for homeless people
 4. Encourage suitable provision of accommodation for those who are, or may become homeless
 5. Minimise youth and young person's homelessness
- 3.4 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy forms part of a wider strategic framework with the Housing Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 3.5 To deliver the strategic aims it is proposed that the Action Plan (**Appendix 2**) will be set out for an initial one year period to enable a more agile approach in light of a fast changing economic, political and legislative environment. This will enable a formal review of progress one year after adoption of the Strategy and production of a revised action plan to continue progress. It will also enable large projects to be broken down into parts over the lifespan of the strategy and fit in with the annual budget setting process at the Council and partner organisations.
- 3.6 Given the strong links between homelessness and health the Strategy and Action Plan have been reviewed and endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board which has helped to gain buy-in on shared objectives from within the developing Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 3.7 There has been a consistent message from all agencies around requirement for a multi-agency approach to address the needs of homeless people with a dual diagnosis or additional, complex needs e.g. our most entrenched rough sleepers. This proposal constitutes a major action within the Action Plan and future options for moving this forward will be explored by officers.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 The Council has a statutory duty to produce a Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 To fulfil the Council's statutory commitments under the Homelessness Act 2002.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

- Enable well-planned quality housing and developments that meet the needs of Southend's residents and businesses
- Reduce inequalities and increase the life chances of people living in Southend
- Continue to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and adults

6.2 Financial Implications

Where there are actions from the Homelessness Prevention Strategy which identify a budgetary element/implications these will be highlighted within the Action Plan.

Targets from the action plan will be met using existing budgets where possible and where additional funding is required this is highlighted in the action plan.

If following further investigation additional funding is required to complete an action this would require authorisation through the Council's budget and policy setting process.

The Action plan will be refreshed annually to allow for a re-appraisal of resource requirements in line with annual budget setting processes.

The Action plan highlights the intention to identify and apply for any external funding which becomes available as appropriate.

6.3 Legal Implications

The Council has a statutory duty to develop and publish a homelessness strategy.

6.4 People Implications

The strategy aims to improve the range and quality of housing and support options available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

6.5 Property Implications

None identified.

6.6 Consultation

The report was considered and discussed at the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 30th January 2014. There was general consensus and support for the policy and the content of the report. The report and policy have been updated to reflect the questions and comments raised by Members at the meeting. The report was endorsed for consultation with key stakeholders prior to submission to Cabinet on 18th March 2014.

The Strategy has been reviewed by the Health and Wellbeing Board on 30th January 2014 and comments from this meeting have been fed-in to the strategy.

A consultation exercise has been undertaken on the Aims and Actions for the strategy in order to capture key stakeholder views and help to ensure the Strategy is accepted by all delivery partners.

Consultation activity included workshop events with stakeholders and attending associated forums with statutory and voluntary sector partners. Public consultation via the Council's website and meetings with individual stakeholders to discuss actions have helped to inform the final document.

All comments from the consultation were taken into account with some being incorporated into the Action Plan and some being incorporated in to the Strategy itself.

Regular meetings and electronic updates will be held with key stakeholders in order to monitor the progress towards meeting aims and actions of the strategy.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

A full Equality Analysis is being finalised and will be published with the final version of the strategy.

6.8 Risk Assessment

Failure to produce and implement the actions from a robust homelessness prevention strategy could have serious financial risks for the Council and partners and result in an increase in social problems in the town.

In order to ensure that the strategy is robust the strategy has been developed in partnership with and using intelligence from other agencies who deal with homelessness in Southend. The strategy is based on demonstrable evidence of demand for homelessness services and a review of national economic and political trends which may affect demand in future.

6.9 Value for Money

The format for the Homelessness Prevention Strategy has been reviewed to ensure that bureaucratic burden is reduced to achieve Value for Money.

Targets from the action plan will be met using existing budgets and where additional funding is required this is highlighted within the action plan.

The strategy highlights opportunities for cost savings to be realised through partnership working and this will be further investigated as part of the action plan.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

A coordinated approach to tackling homeless will have a positive impact on community safety.

6.11 Environmental Impact

It is not considered that the strategy will have any notable Environmental Impact.

7. Background Papers

N/A

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 - The Southend-on-Sea Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-2017

Appendix 2 - Action Plan