

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Corporate Director for People
to
Health & Wellbeing Board
on
30th January 2014

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

The Southend-on-Sea Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-17 (Draft)

Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To outline the contents of the draft 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.

Recommendation

- 2.1 The Board's views are sought on the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan.
- 2.2 To endorse the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan for final consultation with stakeholders.
- 2.3 To note the strategic links between the Homelessness Prevention and Health and Wellbeing Strategies and future actions to realise shared ambitions.

Background

- 3.1 The current Homelessness Prevention Strategy (2012-14) has come to the end of its applicability and as summarised in part 2 of the draft 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.
- 3.2 The draft 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**

- 3.3 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy forms part of a wider strategic framework with the Housing Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 3.4 The aim of improving health and wellbeing outcomes for homeless people in the borough places an emphasis on the need for provision beyond housing when addressing homelessness issues.
- 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.

Direct links to the aims of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy

- 3.6 The 2013 – 2015 Health and Wellbeing Strategy includes many ambitions which are closely linked to the prevention and reduction of homelessness, including improving mental wellbeing, a safer population, living independently, maximising opportunity and housing. It sets out that the Health and Wellbeing Board will ensure that:
- ‘partners work with the third and voluntary sector to tackle homelessness’ and that
 - ‘there is greater joint commissioning, delivering health, social care and housing services in a more joined up way.’
- 3.7 The draft 2014-2017 Homelessness Prevention Strategy has been formulated to align with the strategic direction of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and contribute towards the implementation of its ambitions.
- 3.8 In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002 the Council has a statutory duty to conduct a review of homelessness in Southend and produce a Homelessness Strategy based on the findings of that review.
- 3.9 Under the Act, a Local Authority’s Homelessness Prevention Strategy must ensure the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- 3.10 Our review of homelessness has found that current approaches to dealing with the most entrenched rough sleepers in Southend could be improved. Some of our rough sleepers were homeless over a year ago, despite being known, and having contact with various teams and agencies. Furthermore, ad-hoc meetings are having to be called where the Authority become aware of specific situations that have reached crisis point. Improving how multi-agency work is coordinated for such clients would not only produce improved health and wellbeing outcomes for our residents but also ensure the efficiency of cross-partner involvement.

- 3.9 A case conference approach to dealing with rough sleepers has shown willingness from key-agencies to improve partnership working but further development work is required in order to make this a success.
- 3.10 There has been a consistent message from a number of agencies around the requirement for a multi-agency panel that holds regular case conferences/updates to address the needs of homeless people with a dual diagnosis or additional, complex needs e.g. our most entrenched rough sleepers. However, in order to make such an approach effective further exploration is required to understand how processes for referring, prioritising and involving and measuring the progress of clients is required. Additionally, agencies need to sign-up to this approach and ensure regular staff attendance at such meetings and be given the authority and tools to put appropriate support in place quickly, this may require a degree of service flexibility. This proposal constitutes a major action within aim 3 of the draft action plan and it is proposed that it will be lead by the DAAT.
- 3.11 In order to review how this ambition can be realised the project team have organised a research trip to view a best practice example of the Making Every Adult Matter in Cambridge. Colleagues from housing, SEPT, DAAT, Community Housing, Supporting People, Essex Police, SMAART, Family Mosaic and HARP have been invited to a meeting with colleagues in Cambridge to gather best practice on their approach to coordinating support for adults with complex needs. The project has a track record of delivering significant savings and improving service delivery.
- 3.12 Following the outcome of the research trip the project team will assess the implications for service delivery in Southend. It is proposed that a report is produced outlining options for taking this forward locally to key stakeholders and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 3.13 It is also proposed that the outcomes of the project teams' work around complex needs are fed into the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

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 as 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

Due to there being a lack of formalised process, resources or service flexibility around dealing with rough sleepers with complex needs, duplication of work/meetings is currently taking place with little in the way of measurable results. At times, this has led to the need for high-level involvement in such cases. A high level commitment to developing an approach for dealing with complex needs such as rough sleepers with a dual diagnosis could improve efficiency of staff engagement with clients and partners, ensuring the effectiveness of staff time and resource.

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 process.

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 that is based on the findings of a review, and for the strategy to ensure the satisfactory provision of support for people who are, or may become homeless.

A failure to adopt improved approaches to dealing with entrenched rough sleepers with complex needs (such as a dual diagnosis) upon identifying this as an issue, may mean that the 'satisfactory provision of support' is not in place for Southend's homeless.

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

A consultation exercise was 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 a workshop event with stakeholders, attending associated forums with voluntary sector partners in addition to consultation via the Council's website and meetings with individual stakeholders to discuss actions.

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.

A final consultation meeting with stakeholders is planned in early February to receive final comments and finalise and agree ownership of actions.

The Strategy is being reviewed by Pre-cabinet scrutiny on 30th January 2014 and comments from this meeting will be fed-in to the strategy.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

A full Equality Analysis will be completed prior to Cabinet submission.

6.8 Risk Assessment

The failure to adopt improved approaches to coordinating support for rough sleepers with complex needs could result in the loss stakeholder support and buy-in to the wider Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

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.

Background Papers

N/A

Appendices

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

Appendix 2 Action Plan (Draft)