
HOMELESSNESS REVIEW & STRATEGY 2018-2022

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides the Committee with background information to enable Members to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of the draft proposals for **“Homelessness Review & Strategy 2018-22”** prior to its consideration by the Cabinet at its meeting on the 13 December 2018.
2. A copy of the draft Cabinet Report is attached at **Appendix A**, which in turn contains the following:
 - **Appendix 1** – The Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022
 - **Appendix 2** – Equality Impact Assessment

Background¹

3. Under Section 50 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 a local housing authority must periodically carry out a homelessness review for its area and formulate and adopt a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review. The Council must adopt a homelessness strategy in 2018 and a new homelessness strategy in every fourth year after that.

¹ Source: Draft Cabinet proposal attached at Appendix A

4. The review findings provide the evidence base upon which the Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 has been developed. The Strategy sets out a co-ordinated approach to assisting those threatened with and experiencing homelessness. It identifies available services and resources, and how they will be improved to ensure people receive appropriate, timely help and support.

Issues

5. Attached at **Appendix A** is the Cabinet Proposal on this issue.

Findings of the Homelessness Review

6. The Cabinet Proposal sets out the findings of the Homelessness Review under the following key headings (***paragraphs 7-17 of the Cabinet Proposal***):

- Increasing Demand
- Early Intervention
- Causes of Homelessness
- Financial Issues
- Private Rented Sector
- Family Breakdown
- Specialist Pathways
- Vulnerable Groups
- Relieving Homelessness
- Social Housing
- Equalities

7. A graphic summarising the Review is set out overleaf.



Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022

The Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 responds to a comprehensive review of homelessness in Cardiff undertaken during 2018. This page outlines the Key Findings of the review. Our subsequent plans are overleaf.

Vision and Key Aims

'to work with our partners to prevent homelessness, providing the right support at the right time to meet the housing needs of our citizens'

- Provide high quality housing advice services across the city, helping all citizens to find the right housing solution for them
- Take early action to help prevent homelessness
- Provide good quality temporary housing, continuing to avoid the use of bed and breakfast accommodation
- Work with both private and social landlords to ensure that a range of good quality permanent housing solutions are available
- To ensure appropriate support is available for our more vulnerable citizens
- To work in partnership with statutory and third sector agencies to ensure a joined up service for clients

KEY FINDINGS OF THE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW



INCREASING DEMAND

Demand for services has increased significantly. Applications for help have increased by 68% since April 2015. Households threatened with homelessness have increased by 103%.



EARLY INTERVENTION

During 2017/18 Cardiff prevented 73% of households from becoming homeless where help was sought at an early stage. This was the third highest result in Wales. However, many households do not seek help prior to becoming homeless and there is a need to increase accessibility and availability of services so that more people access assistance at an early stage.



FINANCIAL ISSUES

Mortgage and Rent arrears was the chief cause of the threat of homelessness in 2017/18 with 707 cases, a 247% increase on the previous year. Wider social issues such as the impact of welfare reform are contributing to a significant increase in the number of people experiencing financial difficulties leading to rent arrears.



PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

Loss of rented or tied accommodation, other than through rent arrears is also a major cause of homelessness in Cardiff. Evidence suggests that landlords are selling their properties and leaving the private rental market. High levels of rent in Cardiff, and the reluctance of landlords to let to benefit claimants have been identified as barriers to effectively using this resource. There is a need to better support landlords and increase incentives for them to house homeless applicants.



FAMILY BREAKDOWN

There has been an 81% increase in clients losing accommodation provided by parents, relatives or friends from April 2015 to March 2018. This became the biggest cause of homelessness in Cardiff in 2017/18. There is a need to build on the current family mediation arrangements. There are also concerns that changes to the Cardiff Housing Allocation Scheme in 2015, which affected the priority status of applicants living at home, are contributing to the increase in those presenting with parental notices and changes to the Allocation Scheme are necessary to address this.



EQUALITIES

A high proportion of single young men and those from certain ethnic backgrounds are becoming homeless and reasons for this need to be explored.

SPECIALIST PATHWAYS

There are a high number of households in Cardiff needing to move on from accommodation provided by the National Asylum Support Services following a decision on their case.

There is also limited opportunity for prevention with the majority of prisoners. A review of the pathway for these households is required to assess if there scope for improved prevention work.

VULNERABLE GROUPS

Many clients have complex issues resulting from Adverse Childhood Experiences, leading to issues such as mental health and substance dependency. Often these clients can struggle to maintain any form of accommodation resulting in a revolving door of homelessness. A person-centred, trauma informed approach is needed with multi-agency input, to address the underlying causes of homelessness.

RELIEVING HOMELESSNESS

Cardiff has a wide range of high quality temporary and supported housing and has successfully avoided the use of bed and breakfast accommodation since January 2006. However, the number of clients entering temporary accommodation has increased while the number moving on to permanent accommodation has decreased in recent years. This has resulted in longer periods spent in temporary provision. There is a need to improve move-on options to prevent long stays in temporary accommodation.

SOCIAL HOUSING

There are almost 8000 households on the waiting list and approximately 400 new applicants each month. Demand for social housing cannot be met by the current supply despite ambitious new build plans. The Private Rented Sector is essential in addressing the needs of homeless households.

CLIENT SURVEY



86%

Satisfied with their Temporary Accommodation

89%

Satisfied with the advice received overall.

93%

Satisfied with the help they received by the Council when threatened with homelessness

8. Arising from the Review, the Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 has been developed and can be found at **Appendix 1** to the Cabinet Proposal. The Strategy sets out an overarching vision for homelessness services in Cardiff and high level aims as follows:

Vision

To work with our partners to prevent homelessness in Cardiff; providing the right support at the right time to meet the housing needs of our citizens.

9. The aims of the Strategy are to:

- Provide high quality housing advice services across the city, helping all citizens to find the right housing solution for them;
- Take early action to help prevent homelessness;
- Provide good quality temporary housing, continuing to avoid the use of bed and breakfast accommodation;
- Work with both private and social landlords to ensure that a range of good quality permanent housing solutions are available;
- To ensure appropriate support is available for our more vulnerable citizens;
- To work in partnership with statutory and third sector agencies to ensure a joined up service for clients.

10. To support these aims, a number of **“We Will” commitments** have been set out.

A summary of the commitments and key actions are set out in the graphic below:



11. The Cabinet Proposal states that *“Key actions to support these commitments have been set out in the Strategy (**Appendix 1**) and a full action plan will be developed with partners to implement these over the life of the Strategy”*. The Key actions are also set out in the graphic above.

12. The Cabinet Proposal also sets out the following:

- Resourcing the Changes (**paragraph 20**)
- Proposed Changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme (**paragraph 21**):
 - Length of Stay in Temporary Accommodation
 - Family Breakdown
 - Move on from Hostels and Supported Housing
- Review of the Cardiff Rough Sleepers Strategy 2017-2020 (**paragraphs 22-26**)
- Consultation and Equality Impact Assessment (**paragraphs 27-29 and Appendix 2**)

13. The key recommendations set out in the Cabinet Proposal are:

- i. To agree the Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 as set out at Appendix 1.
- ii. To agree the proposed changes to the Cardiff Housing Allocation Scheme as set out at paragraph 21.

Way Forward

14. At this meeting, the following witnesses will be in attendance:

- (i) Councillor Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing;
- (ii) Sarah McGill, Corporate Director for People and Communities; and
- (iii) Jane Thomas, Assistant Director, Housing & Communities

15. Following a presentation, Members will be able to decide if they wish to feed any comments, observations or recommendations to the appropriate Cabinet Member for their consideration.
16. Pre-decision scrutiny aims to inform the Cabinet's decisions by making evidence based recommendations. Scrutiny Members are advised to:
- i) look at the information provided in the report to Cabinet to see if this is sufficient to enable the Cabinet to make an informed decision;
 - ii) check the financial implications section of the Cabinet report to be aware of the advice given;
 - iii) check the legal implications section of the Cabinet report to be aware of the advice given;
 - iv) check the recommendations to Cabinet to see if these are appropriate.
17. Members will then be able to decide what comments, observations or recommendations they wish to pass on to the Cabinet for their consideration prior to making their decisions on the 13 December 2018.

Previous Scrutiny of this Issue

18. Members of this Scrutiny Committee have previously been involved in a range of pre-decision and policy development activities with this issue, including information and data set out in the HRA and Directorate Business Plans; and quarterly PI results via the Committee's Performance Panel. Other items include:

- Homelessness & Housing Need Briefing – 16 May 2018
- Rough Sleepers Strategy – 8 March 2017²
- Cardiff Housing Strategy – 6 July 2016³
- Private Rented Sector & Homelessness – 2 March 2016⁴
- Housing Allocations – 2 December 2015⁵

² <http://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=2787&Ver=4&LLL=0>

³ <http://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=2434&Ver=4&LLL=0>

⁴ <http://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=2406&Ver=4&LLL=0>

⁵ <http://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=2387&Ver=4&LLL=0>

- Street Homelessness in Cardiff – 7 October 2015⁶
- Implementing Part 2 of the Housing Wales Act 2014 – 1 April 2015⁷
- Housing Allocations Policy – 3 December 2014⁸
- Homelessness – preparing for the Housing Act 2014 – 1 October 2014⁹

Legal Implications

19. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

20. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications

⁶ <http://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=2377&Ver=4&LLL=0>

⁷ <http://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=287&Ver=4&LLL=0>

⁸ <http://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=177&Ver=4&LLL=0>

⁹ <http://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?CommitteId=141&MeetingId=761&DF=01%2f10%2f2014&Ver=2&LLL=0>

at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- i. consider the information set out in **Appendix A** to this report;
- ii. consider the information provided in the presentation to this meeting;
- iii. decide whether it wishes to relay any comments or observations to the Cabinet at its meeting on the 13 December 2018; and decide the way forward with regard to any further scrutiny of this issue.

DAVINA FIORE

Director of Governance and Legal Services

29 November 2018