

**CITY OF CARDIFF COUNCIL  
CYNGOR DINAS CAERDYDD**

**CABINET MEETING: 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

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**CARDIFF HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2018-2022**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR FOR PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES**

**AGENDA ITEM:**

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**PORTFOLIO: Housing & Communities (COUNCILLOR LYNDA THORNE)**

**Reason for this Report**

1. To report on the findings of the Homelessness Review and to seek approval for the Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022.
2. To seek approval for amendments to the Cardiff Housing Allocation Scheme in connection with the objectives of the Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022.
3. To update on the progress in implementing the Cardiff Rough Sleeper Strategy 2017-2020.

**Background**

4. 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.
5. In line with these requirements a comprehensive homelessness review has been undertaken, focusing on the key themes of advice, prevention, accommodation and support. In carrying out this review a wide range of data from the Council's homelessness and advice services was considered and also data from Supporting People funded services. In addition views of services users and partners were gathered and these have informed the review.
6. 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

### Findings of the Homelessness Review

The key findings of the Homelessness Review are set out below:

7. **Increasing Demand** - There has been a significant increase in demand for homelessness services. Since April 2015 applications for assistance have increased by 68% and the number of households threatened with homelessness has increased by 103%.
8. **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 the accessibility and availability of services so that more people access assistance at an early stage.
9. **Causes of Homelessness** - The main causes of the threat of homelessness and actual homelessness were identified during the review and the key themes are outlined below:
10. **Financial Issues** - 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, particularly in the private rented sector. In 2017/18 mortgage or rent arrears was the chief cause of the threat of homelessness, with 707 cases recorded. This represents a 247% increase on the previous year.
11. **Private Rented Sector** - Loss of rented or tied accommodation, other than through rent arrears, is a major cause of homelessness in Cardiff. Evidence suggests that landlords are leaving the private rental market and selling their properties. Although the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 gave local authorities the power to discharge homeless duty through the private rented sector, 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.
12. **Family Breakdown** - There has been an 81% increase in clients losing accommodation provided by parents, relatives or friends over the period 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.
13. **Specialist Pathways** - There are a high number of households in Cardiff needing to move on from accommodation provided by the National Asylum Support Service following a decision on their case. A review of

the pathway is required to ensure these clients receive help prior to losing their accommodation. Prison Leavers also account for a significant number of people accessing homelessness services. There is limited opportunity to intervene early to prevent homelessness for the majority of these clients. A review of the pathway for these households is required to assess if there is scope for improved prevention work with these clients. There is also scope to improve prevention activity for young people, through increased family mediation.

14. **Vulnerable Groups** – Many clients have complex issues resulting from Adverse Childhood Experiences, resulting in needs 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.
15. **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.
16. **Social Housing** – All social landlords in Cardiff are committed to housing homeless households and regularly exceed set targets. However, with almost 8,000 households live on the Cardiff Housing Waiting List (as at 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018) and approximately 400 new applicants joining the list each month, demand for social housing cannot be met by current supply. The private rented sector is therefore essential in addressing the needs of homeless households.
17. **Equalities** – A full equalities review has shown that a high proportion of single young men and those from Black/African/Caribbean/Black British and Other ethnic backgrounds are becoming homeless and the reasons for this need to be further explored.

## **Homelessness Strategy**

18. Responding to these key issues, the Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 has been developed and is attached at Appendix 1. 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.

## **Aims**

- 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.

## **“We Will” Commitments**

To support these aims a number of “We Will” commitments have been set out. A summary of the key commitments are set out below:

- Extend and improve housing advice and better publicise the services available to help prevent homelessness;
- Build on the success of current prevention work by developing more focused and targeted prevention services;
- Improve the support available to private landlords to ensure homeless families have access to good quality private sector accommodation;
- Review specialist pathways into services to ensure they are working effectively;
- Review the success of the revised housing allocation policy to ensure that the needs of homeless and other vulnerable people are met;
- Improve services to the most vulnerable by addressing the underlying causes of homelessness;
- To reduce the time spent in all forms of temporary and hostel accommodation by increasing move on options;
- Explore the reasons for the differential impact of homeless on some groups, in particular younger men and those from certain ethnic backgrounds.

19. Key actions to support these commitments have been set out in the Strategy and a full action plan will be developed with partners to implement these over the life of the Strategy.

### **Resourcing the Changes**

20. The Welsh Government made additional funding available for homelessness in the 2018/19 settlement; this funding is being used to increase resources for advice and prevention work to support the commitments in the Strategy. Welsh Government grants such as Supporting People Programme Grant and Homeless Prevention Grant are used primarily to fund third sector housing and homelessness support services. Cardiff is also proactive in bidding for additional ad hoc grants to fund additional services. Resources for homelessness services will need to be kept under review if demand continues to increase at the current rate.

### **Proposed Changes to the Cardiff Housing Allocation Scheme**

21. A number of the findings from the review could be addressed through amendments to the Cardiff Housing Allocation Scheme. To ensure that the needs of homeless and other vulnerable people are met, the following changes to the Scheme are proposed:
  - **Length of Stay in Temporary Accommodation** - in order to address the length of stay in temporary accommodation, it is proposed that the number of high availability areas that homeless applicants are required to choose will be increased from 2 to 4 areas. While still giving homeless households choice about the area in which they wish to live, this change will increase the chance of an appropriate social housing offer becoming available within a reasonable time and thereby reduce the length of stay in temporary accommodation.
  - **Family Breakdown** – it is proposed that applicants who have been given notice from parents, friends or relatives who are no longer willing to accommodate them and where there are significant/exceptional circumstances will be given additional priority if they remain at home. They will be included in Band Bi of the General Housing Waiting List. Eligibility for this band will be determined by officers in the Housing Options Service.
  - **Move On from Hostels and Supported Housing** – a clear pathway will be developed for move on from hostels and supported housing projects. It is proposed that additional priority will be given to these individuals. Those needing to move on from hostels and supported housing who are particularly vulnerable will be included in Band Bi of General Waiting List, with less vulnerable applicants needing to move on included in Band Bii. Support needs for these clients will be assessed and appropriate support put in place to ensure successful move on.

These changes will help address immediate issues relating to homelessness and it is recommended that these are implemented immediately. A full review of the Cardiff Housing Allocation Scheme is planned for 2019/20.

### **Review of the Cardiff Rough Sleeper Strategy 2017-2020**

22. Cardiff, in line with the rest of Wales, has experienced an upward trend in rough sleeping in recent years. Numbers of rough sleepers have however stabilised in Cardiff during the current financial year.
23. Since the introduction of the Cardiff Rough Sleeper Strategy, a number of innovative projects have been developed by the Council and partners to address identified gaps in provision and meet specific needs. These include a Housing First pilot offering direct placements into tenancies with intensive wrap-around support; an accommodation project offering intensive support to people with multiple complex needs; specialist accommodation and support for women with high support needs and at risk of exploitation; and an alternative drop-in facility for rough sleepers not accessing other services. A range of emergency accommodation initiatives have also been put in place including direct access to bed spaces for clients identified by the Outreach team; improved support for those accessing emergency accommodation and planned development of additional emergency provision, including additional pods in Ty Tresillian and Huggard Hostels and an extension to the Wallich Nightshelter.
24. Improved monitoring of the Single Persons Gateway accommodation including hostels and supported housing identifies a high number of homeless clients repeatedly being evicted, abandoning placements or experiencing a placement breakdown. While 204 rough sleepers were assisted into accommodation during 2017/18 some of these will be repeat individuals as unfortunately placements often break down. There are currently 51 clients within the Gateway who have been placed over 20 times since 2015. Of these, the highest number for an individual is 71 placements, with an average of 26 placements for these complex clients. Many of these clients have one or more support needs relating to substance misuse, mental health or alcohol.
25. In response to this “revolving door of homelessness”, the Council has introduced a Homeless Advocacy Programme to work with individuals to identify reasons and triggers for placement breakdown, with the aim of sustaining placements or supporting positive moves. In addition, to better address complex needs, the multi-disciplinary city centre team will be expanded to include dedicated substance misuse and mental health workers; an additional homeless nurse and counselling service. Support staff will be trained in providing trauma-informed services.
26. While much work has been done to address rough sleeping, the problem remains. A research project will therefore be commissioned to better understand whether services are meeting needs, review best practice and identify any remaining gaps in provision.

## **Consultation and Equality Impact Assessment**

27. A consultation exercise was conducted with stakeholders in April 2018, seeking their comments on the homeless services in Cardiff. The outcomes of this exercise have been incorporated into the homelessness review and subsequent strategy. Partners were also asked to provide feedback on sections of the review as they were drafted.
28. Working in partnership with the Cardiff Research Centre, a client survey was developed covering advice; support for those threatened with homelessness; support for those who were or are homeless; and demographic information. Paper-based and on-line versions of the survey were developed. The survey was posted to clients who had used the Housing Options Service within the last year. Current service users were assisted to complete the survey during appointments in the Hubs or the Housing Options Centre. Partner organisations working within supported accommodation were also asked to assist homeless clients to complete the survey. The survey was live between 30th August and 12th October 2018 and a total of 465 responses were received. The findings are reflected in the Strategy.
29. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the Strategy. A number of actions have been identified as a result of the review including a review of how mental health issues are identified during the initial homelessness assessment to ensure that all needs of the client are being met and further investigation into why single young men and some ethnic minority groups are more affected by homelessness. A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment can be found at Appendix 2.

## **Reason for Recommendations**

30. Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to carry out local homelessness reviews and formulate local strategies. The Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 will ensure that the Council meets this requirement and has current and relevant strategic plans in place to address homelessness.
31. It has been identified that a number of the issues raised in the homelessness review could be addressed through amendments to the Cardiff Housing Allocation Scheme.

## **Financial Implications**

32. The report sets out the Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 and proposes some changes to the Cardiff Housing Allocation Scheme. Any costs incurred in relation to the proposed strategy, any actions arising and other service changes will need to be managed within existing Council budgets for homelessness and any external funding such as Supporting People grant and Homelessness Prevention grant.

**Legal Implications (including Equality Impact Assessment where appropriate)**

33. 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. standing orders and financial regulations; (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.
34. The Council has to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties Councils must in making decisions have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics.
35. Protected characteristics are:
- Age;
  - Gender reassignment;
  - Sex;
  - Race - including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality;
  - Disability;
  - Pregnancy and maternity;
  - Marriage and civil partnership;
  - Sexual orientation;
  - Religion or belief – including lack of belief.
36. As such a decision to implement the proposal has to be made in the context of the Council's equality act public sector duties.
37. The report identifies that an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is appended at Appendix 2. The purpose of the Equality Impact Assessment is to ensure that the Council has understood the potential impacts of the proposal in terms of equality so that it can ensure that it is making proportionate and rational decisions having due regard to its public sector equality duty.
38. The decision maker must have due regard to the Equality Impact Assessment in making its decision.
39. The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a well-being duty on public sector bodies to take action to achieve seven well-being goals in accordance with the 'sustainable development principle'.
40. The seven well-being goals are: "a prosperous Wales", "a resilient Wales", "a healthier Wales", "a more equal Wales", "a Wales of cohesive communities", "a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language"



and "a globally responsible Wales"; and a description of each goal is given in the Act. Decision makers should consider how the proposed decision may contribute towards, or impact upon, achievement of the well-being goals.

41. In order to comply with the well-being duty, the Council must act in accordance with the 'sustainable development principle', which is defined as meaning that the Council must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Put simply, this means that Council decision makers must take into account the impact of their decisions on people living their lives in Wales in the future. There are a number of factors which the Council must take into account in this regard, specifically, decision makers must:

- Look to the long term
- Focus on prevention by understanding the root causes of problems
- Deliver an integrated approach to achieving the seven well-being goals
- Work in collaboration with others to find shared sustainable solutions
- Involve people from all sections of the community in the decisions which affect them

#### **HR Implications**

42. There are no HR implications to this report.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

**SARAH MCGILL**  
**15<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

*The following appendices are attached:*

Appendix 1 - The Cardiff Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022  
Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment

*The following background papers have been taken into account:*

Cardiff Homelessness Review 2018