

CABINET MEETING: 20 JANUARY 2022

CARDIFF HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAMME STRATEGY

HOUSING & COMMUNITIES - (COUNCILLOR LYNDA THORNE)

AGENDA ITEM: 6

Reason for this Report

1. To present the draft Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 - 2026 to Cabinet for consideration and approval.

Background

2. The Welsh Government requires that each local authority develop a Housing Support Programme Strategy which sets out the strategic direction for homelessness prevention and housing related support services for the next four years. Each local authority is required to carry out a comprehensive needs assessment and stakeholder engagement and from this to identify and set out the key priorities for the local authority and its partners.
3. The Housing Support Programme Strategy satisfies the existing statutory requirements for a homelessness strategy under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022, has been updated and incorporated into this new single Strategy.

Progress on Homelessness and Housing Support Services

4. Prior to the pandemic Cardiff had carried out extensive research into good practice in addressing homelessness from within the UK and across the world, proposals were developed to improve services, to maximise prevention, ensure effective assessment of need and deliver the right accommodation pathways. When the Covid pandemic arrived there was an opportunity to accelerate the implementation of these changes.
5. The good progress previously made in reducing rough sleeping from 87 to 30 individuals by March 2020 improved further during the pandemic reaching a low of 6 during lockdown and stabilising at the current levels of circa 20 individuals.

6. In July 2020 Cabinet agreed that there would be “no going back” following the pandemic and agreed to a new way forward for homelessness and support services for both single people and families which included:
 - To prevent homelessness wherever possible
 - To deliver an assessment / triage approach to identify the need of the individual and ensure the right accommodation and support solution is provided
 - To move people rapidly into independent housing accommodation with separate pathways for lower needs clients
 - For those with the most complex needs provide good quality, self-contained supported accommodation.
7. A range of projects were approved to support this new way forward including:
 - Development of a Single Homeless Assessment Centre
 - Expansion of the Homeless Multi-disciplinary team
 - A new model of health service delivered directly to hostels
 - Significant increase in capacity and improvement in quality of supported accommodation for single people
 - The delivery of 3 Family Homelessness Centres
 - Participation in the Welsh Government Leasing Scheme to make better use of the private rented sector
8. Additional Welsh Government Funding both revenue and capital were made available to take forward these projects and good progress has been made in delivering these.
9. The Draft Housing Support Programme Strategy (attached at appendix 1) is fully aligned with the way forward previously agreed by Cabinet and also meets national policy and best practice. The Strategy also takes into account the results of a recent consultation exercise and needs assessment.

Consultation and Need Assessment

10. A consultation exercise was conducted with partners and stakeholders in November 2021, seeking their comments on the homeless services in Cardiff. The key findings from this exercise have been incorporated into the Strategy.
11. Working in partnership with the Cardiff Research Centre, a client survey was carried out. The survey was sent by email to 3,000 clients who had used the Housing Options Service since April 2020 and was promoted through social media. Current service users were assisted to complete the survey during telephone appointments in the Hubs. Staff and partner organisations working within supported accommodation were also asked to assist homeless clients to complete the survey. The survey was live between 5th November and 13th December 2021 and a total of 380

responses were received. The key findings of this survey are reflected in the Strategy.

12. A detailed needs assessment was also carried out and a statement of need developed, this can be found at page 8 and 9 of the strategy. The findings from this needs assessment have directly contributed to the strategic priorities as set out in the Strategy.

Issues:

Cardiff Housing Support Programme Strategy

13. The Cardiff Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 - 2026 is attached at Appendix 1. The Strategy sets out an overarching vision for homelessness and housing support services in Cardiff, principles and high level aims as follows:

Vision

14. *We will aim to prevent homelessness wherever possible, and where prevention is not possible, we will seek to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and not repeated*

Principles

- Our services will be trauma informed and will recognise the underlying causes of homelessness.
- We will work collaboratively across professional boundaries with both statutory and third sector partners.
- We will co-produce solutions with individuals, families, and partners.
- We will champion equality and seek to understand the reasons for inequality
- We will take an assertive approach to services, ensuring that all people can access the help they need.

Key Aims

- Prevent homelessness wherever possible.
- Ensure that everyone receives the right help and support
- Take a rapid rehousing approach to homelessness
- Provide good quality supported accommodation for those who need it

15. Each of the Key Aims is supported by a number of Strategic Priorities and forms a chapter in the Strategy. Examples of the findings from the needs assessment and surveys and how they relate to the strategic priorities that have been set are set out below.

Examples of Findings and Strategic Priorities

Key Aim 1 - Prevent homelessness wherever possible.

Findings - Homeless Prevention

16. During 2020/21 76% of households who approached the Housing Options Service at an early stage were prevented from becoming homeless, and so far in 2021/22 there have been further improvements. However, many households do not seek help prior to becoming homeless during 2020/21 there was a 27% decline in the number of households seeking help who were at risk of homelessness. There is a need to promote prevention services more widely, using various means to ensure we prevent homelessness wherever possible.
17. Research by Citizens Advice has concluded that 1 in 3 private renters have lost income during the pandemic and 11% of private renters are currently behind on their rent. However, in 2020/21 there was a 52% decline in the number of people seeking assistance from the Housing Options Services with mortgage and rent arrears. This situation was the same in the first half of 2021/22. There is a need to increase promotion of the financial support available including the new Tenancy Hardship Grant.
18. It is anticipated that the impact of this suppressed demand may not be felt until later in the year or until 2022/23.
19. **Strategic Priority** - *Encourage take up of advice and prevention services by:*
 - *Developing a communications plan to widely promote the help available to prevent homelessness*
 - *Increasing the accessibility of specialist housing advice, mediation, and prevention services, by providing these through the Community Hubs.*

Findings - Family Breakdown & Supporting Young People

20. Clients who lose accommodation provided by parents, relatives or friends is a significant cause of homelessness in Cardiff. It is predicted that more than 600 households will be at risk of homelessness this year due to family breakdown and nearly 400 will become homeless for this reason. 47% of those who have received assistance this year so far are 25 years old or younger. A dedicated Prevention Officer works directly with young people and their families to prevent homelessness where possible. So far this year 80% of young people at risk of losing family accommodation have been prevented from becoming homeless, however there is still more that can be done to help young people at an early stage.

21. **Strategic Priority** - Review and enhance our advice and meditation services, with particular regard to young people, preventing family breakdown wherever possible and consider targeted interventions and support for school-aged children and their families.

Key Aim 2 - Ensure that everyone receives the right help and support

Findings - Rough Sleeping

22. Significant progress has been made in reducing the number of individuals sleeping rough in the city. Between November 2020 and July 2021 rough sleepers in Cardiff accounted for just 13% of all rough sleepers in Wales. An increased number of rough sleepers are being assisted into accommodation, with an average of 22 placements a month in 2021/22 so far. However, the challenge is to help rough sleepers maintain this accommodation and move towards independent living as soon as possible.
23. **Strategic Priority** - continue to support and assist rough sleepers to access and maintain accommodation – by reviewing and developing our assertive outreach approach to ensure that rough sleeper numbers in the city remain low.

Findings - Complex Needs

24. Many clients have complex issues such as mental health and substance dependency. Mental health is the largest lead and secondary support need for all of our housing support clients. To better address complex needs, Cardiff's Homelessness Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) includes dedicated substance misuse and mental health workers, homeless nurses and counselling services. Support staff are also trained in providing trauma-informed services. The continued input of the specialist MDT is having a real and long-lasting impact on homelessness in Cardiff and there are now significant numbers of people engaged in treatment and counselling therapy whilst they are accessing temporary or supported accommodation. We want to further develop the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and ensure clear pathways are in place for move on to mainstream services when appropriate.
25. For those with substance misuse issues, providing nurse-led prescribing services directly into hostels aimed at harm-reduction and rapid prescribing during the pandemic has had an extremely positive result. There are currently 44 clients engaging with these outreach services, 32 of which are in treatment. We want to continue this excellent work and focus on assertive re-engagement with those that may fall out of treatment.
26. **Strategic Priority** – Ensure that complex needs are met by:

- *Furthering develop the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) and ensure clear pathways are in place for move on to mainstream services when appropriate.*
 - *Ensure that appropriate health and support services are available in hostels and supported accommodation, continuing the new model of delivering health services directly into the accommodation. Fully training staff and focusing on assertive re-engagement with those that may fall out of services.*
27. **Strategic Priority:** *Embed an assessment / triage approach for all those presenting as homeless by:*
- *Ensuring need is properly identified for both individuals and families, and that housing and support plans are tailored to individual need.*
 - *Reviewing the success of the Single Homeless Assessment Centre and consider future development of the scheme.*

Key Aim 3 - Take a rapid rehousing approach to homelessness

Findings -Challenges to delivering rapid rehousing

28. **Temporary Accommodation** - Cardiff has a wide range of self-contained temporary and supported accommodation and has recently increased and improved its provision. There are currently around 1,450 households in temporary or supported accommodation across all our accommodation and support gateways. There is a need to improve move-on options to prevent long stays in accommodation and to develop a rapid rehousing approach so that individuals and families can exit homelessness quickly, however there are significant challenges to delivering this.
29. **Demand for Social Housing** - There are over 8,000 households on the Cardiff Housing Waiting List and approximately 300 new applicants join each month. The number of social housing lets fluctuates each year but between 2019/20 and 2020/21, 171 fewer general lets were made, a reduction of 14%. Out of necessity we are already allocating a high proportion of our social housing to homeless clients. In 2020/21 63% of general lets were made to homeless clients which has also led to a reduction in the average waiting time for these clients. However there are many applicants who are not homeless who are in significant housing need and therefore demand for social housing cannot be met by the current supply despite ambitious new build plans.
30. **Issues with the Private Rented Sector** –The use of the private rented sector housing for both preventing homelessness and enabling move on from temporary accommodation has declined for some groups. Evidence suggests that landlords are leaving the private rental market and selling their properties. There is currently high demand and a lack of supply of privately rented accommodation across the city. Current rents for two bed properties are higher than the LHA by £200 a month. This

increases to £450 for a four-bedroom property. There is a need to examine the issues in the private rented sector more closely and create and promote more affordable options.

31. **Strategic Priority** - *Develop a rapid rehousing transition plan – aimed at reducing the number of people becoming homeless and reducing any time spent in temporary accommodation by:*

- *Improving our offer to private landlords, extending the range of incentives available and promoting the private rented leasing scheme.*
- *Increasing move on options for single people, including the development of managed housing schemes.*
- *Increasing the supply of socially rented accommodation by building 1,500 social housing units over the next 5 years (council only) and continue to seek ways to increase the supply of social and affordable housing.*
- *Increasing Housing First provision and the access to intensive support in the community.*

Key Aim 4 - Provide good quality supported accommodation for those who need it

Findings - Single People and Families

32. Cardiff has already made very good progress in delivering high quality self-contained supported accommodation for single people and families, we need to build on this by delivering the remainder of the planned schemes.

33. **Strategic Priority** - *Improve the quality of our supported accommodation, delivering the planned supported housing scheme for single people at Adams Court, delivering the new family homelessness centres at Gasworks and Harrison Avenue and phasing out accommodation that no longer meets the required standards.*

Findings - Young People

34. The number of Looked After Children in Cardiff is increasing and we are seeing a rise in the number of young people with complex support needs who are unsuitable for current provision within the Young Persons Gateway. There is a need to provide more suitable accommodation for young people with high support needs.

35. **Strategic Priority** - *Ensure the young person's gateway accommodation meets current needs by reviewing and increasing capacity within the gateway as needed, by delivering the planned supported housing scheme for young people with complex needs.*

Findings - Domestic Abuse

36. Demand for Domestic Abuse services is increasing. In 2020/21 there was a 51% increase in the number of people who were homeless due to a violent breakdown of a relationship. Between 2019/20 and 2020/21 the number of High-Risk Police Protection Notices received by the RISE service increased by 27%. In 2020/21, 60 women were unable to access accommodation as there was no space in a refuge.
37. **Strategic Priorities** - *carry out a full review of Refuge accommodation in the city and ensure all those who experience domestic abuse can access specialist support.*

Findings of Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

38. A variety of equalities data is collected relating to homeless clients and the needs assessment has demonstrated that homelessness disproportionately affects single men and those from certain ethnic backgrounds. Further work is needed to explore the reasons for this.
39. National research also shows that the LGBT community suffer disproportionately from homelessness, while we do not have data to show this we need to ensure our service is completely inclusive we should gain a better understanding of diverse groups such as the LGBT community and how homelessness affects them. An additional priority was added to the strategy in response to the Equality Impact Assessment as follows: *Gain a better understanding of how homelessness affects diverse groups such single men, those from ethnic minority communities and the LGBT community.*

Childs Right Impact Assessment

40. A Childs Rights Impact Assessment has also been completed and this identified that the Strategy will have a positive impact on children as it commits to providing targeted interventions and support to prevent family breakdown. The new family homelessness centres will offer improved self-contained supported accommodation for families, with appropriate play facilities with support for provided by Early Help and other partners.

Resource Issues

41. It is anticipated that the actions set out in the Strategy can be met through a combination of current general fund resources and Welsh Government Housing Support Grant (HSG). The indicative level of HSG for 2022/2023 through to 2024/25 has been received and it has been confirmed that this will remain at current levels.

42. Lack of affordable / social housing in the city remains a significant issue and will impact on Cardiff's ability to effectively deliver a Rapid Rehousing Approach.

Reason for Recommendations

43. To approve the Housing Support Programme Strategy.
44. The Welsh Government require that the Strategy is forwarded to them for review. It is proposed that authority to update the strategy in light of any comments is delegated to officers in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

Financial Implications

45. The report sets out the Cardiff Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-2026. This is an updated strategy setting out the future vision for the housing and homelessness service.
46. A number of strategic priorities are identified linked to proposed reviews and enhancement of advice and homelessness prevention services. Any costs to be incurred in relation to the proposed strategy, any actions arising and any service changes will need to be managed within existing Council homelessness budgets and any external funding.
47. Revenue and capital grant funding has been made available by the Welsh Government in recent years to address emergency accommodation issues and to support ongoing homelessness services and supported accommodation solutions.
48. The strategy is based on the assumption that current revenue and capital budgets and available grant funding resources are sufficient to enable the objectives set out in the strategy to be achieved. The indicative allocation of Housing Support Grant for 2022/23 through to 2024/25 has been received and is maintained at current levels over the period at £21.86 million per annum. The final offer of grant is not anticipated until March 2022 and after submission of annual spend plans.
49. The report does not identify any additional financial implications but does indicate that any reduction in ongoing grant funding assistance would significantly impact on the ability to maintain service provision at current standards and to progress in line with future ambitions for the service.

Legal Implications

50. 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 eg. 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.

51. The Council must comply with their duties under Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
52. 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.
53. 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
54. As such, a decision to implement the proposal has to be made in the context of the Council's equality act public sector duties.
55. The report identifies that an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is appended at Appendix 1. 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.
56. The decision maker must have due regard to the Equality Impact Assessment in making its decision.

HR Implications

57. Some of the strategic priorities may require a restructure of staffing. In these cases there will be full consultation with trade unions and affected staff. Any changes will be managed through corporately agreed processes.

Property Implications

58. This report makes no specific property recommendations. Strategic Estates work closely with People and Communities where required to support the delivery of property requirements in support of the

homelessness housing objectives. Should future property requirements arise as a result of the Cardiff Housing Support Programme Strategy, Strategic Estates will undertake the necessary valuations and or property transactions in accordance with the Council's established asset management processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to

1. agree the draft Cardiff Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022 - 2026 as set out at Appendix 1.
2. delegate authority to the Director Adults, Housing and Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to make any minor amendments to the Strategy in light of comments from the Welsh Government.

SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Jane Thomas, Director Adults Housing and Communities
	14 January 2022

The following appendices are attached:

Appendix 1 - Cardiff Housing Support Programme Strategy
Appendix 2- Equality Impact Assessment