

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
SOCIAL CARE HEALTH & WELL-BEING CABINET BOARD**

6 December 2018

**Report of the Head of Commissioning, Support & Direct Services -
Angela Thomas**

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

NEATH PORT TALBOT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2018-22

1. Purpose of Report

To present the Neath Port Talbot Homelessness Review 2018 (the Review) and Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 (the Strategy) for approval, prior to their publication.

2. Executive Summary

Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on the Council to undertake a Homelessness Review and produce a Homelessness Strategy for the period 2018-22 (copy attached at Appendix 1).

A report on the findings of the Review (copy attached at Appendix 2) and the Strategy itself are required to receive political approval and be published by the end of 2018.

This report seeks that approval of both documents.

2. Background

In Spring 2018, the Council commissioned an independent review of how it responds to people facing homelessness in order for us to see how we could build on our current practice and develop new ways of working. This review involved extensive engagement with a variety of stakeholders, in order to identify opportunities for change.

The Strategy sets out how we intend to act on the findings of the review, so that we are best placed to meet the needs of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, over the next four years and beyond.

The overall aim of the Strategy is to implement an approach that will prevent homelessness wherever possible and effectively support the household when it occurs.

3. The Review

An independent Housing & Homelessness Consultant with extensive experience of the pan-Wales homelessness strategic arena was commissioned to undertake the review, so as to ensure optimal objectivity. The review aimed to ensure a wide range of input by not only talking to those who are involved in the assessment of homelessness and managing it but also stakeholders who work in other policy areas that impact upon homelessness. The review process included:

- Utilising existing information on homelessness which is available through the statistics collected for the Welsh Government (WG);
- exploring the national policy context in relation to homelessness;
- exploring the local policy context and considered how the delivery of homelessness can complement and reflect it;
- drawing from a specific Supporting People Provider Forum meeting, to which all key multi-agency stakeholders were invited;
- interviewing key representatives from all relevant service areas - including housing/homelessness, social services (adult and children's), social care and housing commissioning, the health board, the private rented sector, the Supporting People team, those working in Community Safety, the substance misuse regional team, the DWP, agencies delivering support and social housing providers; and
- holding a focus group with people who have experienced homelessness.

The general finding of the review was that services need to be developed which 'turn off' the demand for the Council Housing Options services. Not only to prevent homelessness earlier, but to ease the pressure on Council staff and allow them more time to effectively manage crisis, when it unavoidably arises.

The review suggested priority areas for action, in order to develop the support and accommodation services, improve their focus, and direct resources more towards crisis prevention.

4. The Strategy

The action proposed in the Strategy seeks to shift the focus from emergency responses, and fulfilling our homelessness duties to households in crisis, by exploring:

- More focussed, community based support to prevent homelessness, before it becomes a crisis;
- evidence based support and accommodation options for people with complex needs, who have experienced repeat episodes of homelessness, and require a range of services; and
- helping people to achieve permanent housing and reduce demand for temporary accommodation.

To this end, it sets out the action required to pursue the following eight priority areas suggested in the Review:

- Early intervention and Prevention
Strengthening approaches to early intervention and prevention
- Implementing a Multi-Agency Approach
Targeted support for those with the most complex needs to prevent repeat episodes of homelessness
- Review of temporary accommodation service models
Help people to access secure permanent accommodation
- Development of specific housing plans
Focusing on helping people most at risk of experiencing homelessness
- Pooled Budgets
Making best use of our financial resources
- Partnership Working
Further strengthening links with partner agencies to better understand needs and demands
- Information Technology
Enhancing the use of information technology
- Monitoring housing related support services
Ensuring that the services we commission helps us to deliver our strategy

Arrangements are already being made for a more detailed, multi-agency, implementation action plan to be co-produced with stakeholders in the coming months. Progress against this action plan will be reported to Members annually.

5. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve the Neath Port Talbot Homelessness Strategy 2018-22 attached as Appendix 1 to this report and the report of the Homelessness Review 2018 attached as Appendix 2.

5. Reason for Proposed Decision

To comply with the duty placed on the Council by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 to undertake, produce, and publish a Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy, by the end of 2018.

6. Implementation of Decision

The decision is for implementation after the three day call-in period.

7. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to assess the likely impact of proposed policies and practises on its ability to comply with the general duty (to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different groups) for all people with protected characteristics.

The action proposed in the Strategy has undergone a full EIA. The outcome of the EIA is that Officers recommend the action is approved by Members because it will have a positive effect on the service provided to any household threatened with or experiencing homelessness, that applies to the Council for help in preventing or relieving their homelessness.

Further information relating to the detail of the Equality Impact Assessment of the action proposed in the Strategy is attached at Appendix 3.

8. Workforce impacts

There are no currently intentional Council workforce implications inherent in any of the action proposed in the Strategy.

9. Legal impacts

The production and publication of the both the Review and Strategy, by the end of 2018, is a duty placed on the Council by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, as detailed in Chapter 1 of Part 2.

10. Financial impacts

The actions proposed in the Strategy are intended to be cost neutral in the short to medium term and generate longer-term savings. It is not however possible to accurately cost any such savings at present.

11. Consultation

On 2 August 2018, Members approved a 60 day public consultation period in respect of the strategy.

During this period, 5 August to 30 September 2018, a number of consultation and engagement activities took place. The outcome of this activity has helped confirm the content of the final Officer draft of the Strategy which is the subject of this report.

This activity included:

- An overarching public consultation exercise;
- a specific consultation event for multi-agency stakeholders;
- a specific event for current and former users of homelessness services;
- ad-hoc attendance at partners' pre-existing fora;
- inviting social media response; and
- inviting formal written response.

A detailed report of the outcome of the above activity is attached at Appendix 4.

The volume of response was not statistically significant enough to suggest any negative feedback was representative of any widespread objection and, given how widely the exercise was publicised, could be interpreted as suggestive of general support for the proposed action.

Two organisational respondents suggested that the strategy needed to explicitly reflect the needs of a particular group of vulnerable homelessness service users and so that has been reflected in the final version of the strategy that is the subject of this report.

This was the only substantive change that it was felt needed to be made to the consultative draft version of the strategy previously approved by Members.

This is because all other constructive comments, observations, and suggestions received, that it is actually within the Council's gift to act upon, can and so will be acknowledged and appropriately implemented at the action plan developmental stage, without doing so.

12. Risk Management

There are no currently evident or anticipated risks associated with the actions in the Strategy.

13. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Neath Port Talbot Homelessness Strategy 2018-22

Appendix 2 - Neath Port Talbot Homelessness Review 2018

Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 4 - Consultation Report

14. Background Papers

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

Part 2 - Homelessness

(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/7/part/2>)

15. Officer Contact

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