

CONSULTATION REPORT

Housing Support Programme Strategy

1.0 Background

- 1.1 On 3rd March 2022, the Social Care, Health and Well-being Cabinet Board authorised officers to consult members of the public and other stakeholders for 90 days on the draft Housing Support Programme Strategy.
- 1.2 Local authorities are required to produce a Housing Support Programme Strategy every four years.
- 1.3 The purpose of this strategy is to outline the strategic direction of the local authority for housing support services and provide a single strategic view of the local authority's approach to homelessness prevention and housing support services, including both statutory homelessness functions funded through the revenue settlement and non-statutory preventative services funded through the Housing Support Grant (HSG).
- 1.4 The strategy also takes into account what we as a local authority will do to support the delivery of the Welsh Government's (WG) visions and aims to the overall prevention of homelessness and further the transformational shift that is required in order to move to the new rapid re-housing approach.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 A range of engagement and consultation activities have taken place in order to help inform the Strategy, including:
 - Overarching public consultation
 - Stakeholder consultation
 - Formal written responses

3.0 Consultation objectives

- To provide a mechanism for people to contribute their views
- To find out if people agree or disagree with the proposals and the reasons for this

- To provide a mechanism for people to make comments and suggestions
- To provide a mechanism for people to suggest alternative proposals
- To ensure that the consultation was available to as many stakeholders as possible
- To ensure that the consultation was available in a format so people could understand

4.0 Overarching public consultation – Methodology

4.1 To help ensure that the consultation was as widely available as possible, people could submit their views by three mechanisms:

- **Online** - a self-completion questionnaire was published on the Council's website. Respondents were not asked to identify themselves, but were asked to indicate why they were interested in the Draft Strategy. The questionnaire was live from 30th May to 28th August 2022.
- **Email** - The email address ccu@npt.gov.uk was promoted for people who wanted to respond via this mechanism.
- **Corporate social media accounts** – the Council's corporate Facebook and Twitter accounts were also monitored for feedback.

4.2 **The consultation was promoted via:**

- The Council website homepage and a dedicated web page - Have your say <https://www.npt.gov.uk/33271>
- The Council's corporate social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter
- The Council's corporate staff newsletter 'In the Loop'. The purpose of this was to encourage staff to give their views and as an additional way to raise awareness of the consultation amongst residents as a significant number of staff live in the county borough
- At stakeholder forums, such as meetings with providers of services

5.0 Overarching Public Consultation – Responses

A total of 12 completed questionnaires were received during the consultation period. All were completed in English with no responses in Welsh. All of the responses were submitted online.

The following provides a summary of the feedback from the questionnaire responses. All percentages shown in this section are relative to the total number of completed questions as not all respondents completed all questions.

5.1 About the respondents

Of the responses:

- 12 (100%) stated they live in Neath Port Talbot
- 1 (8%) stated that they are an unpaid carer
- 1 (8%) stated they work for the council
- 0 (0%) stated that they are service users
- 0 (0%) stated they are related to a service user
- 0 (0%) stated that they are a member of staff at a service

Note that for the above question respondents were asked to complete all that applied. Therefore some percentages are greater than 100%.

5.2 Age

| Age range (years) | Number | % of respondents |
|--------------------------------|--------|------------------|
| 16 - 24 | | |
| 25 – 29 | | |
| 30 - 39 | | |
| 40 - 49 | | |
| 50 – 59 | | |
| 60 – 69 | | |
| 70 – 74 | 1 | 100% |
| 75 – 86 | | |
| 86+ | | |
| Prefer not to say / not stated | | |
| Total | | |

5.3 Gender

6 (60%) respondents stated they were female, 1 (10%) male, 1 (10%) transgender, and 2 (20%) preferred not to say.

5.4 Nationality

8 (73%) respondents described their nationality as Welsh, 2 (18%) as British and 1 (9%) preferred not to say.

5.5 Ethnic origin

10 (83%) respondents described their ethnicity as White British and 2 (17%) preferred not to say.

5.6 Sexual orientation

9 (82%) respondents described themselves as heterosexual, and 2 (18%) preferred not to say.

5.7 Disability

1 (9%) respondents reported having a disability with 7 (64%) stating that they did not have a disability and 3 (27%) preferring not to say.

5.8 Religion

5 (46%) respondents reported as being Christian, 2 (18%) preferred not to say and 4 (36%) respondents reported as having no religion/beliefs.

5.9 How did you hear about this consultation?

4 (36%) reported hearing of the consultation via the Council's website, 4 (36%) via Facebook, 1 (9%) via a local town, community or county borough councillor, and 2 (18%) by other means.

6.0 What respondents thought about the consultation.

6.1 Was it easy to understand?

8 respondents (80%) stated it was easy to understand, while 2 (20%) stated it was not. Although the numbers are small the majority of respondents found the consultation easy to understand.

6.2 Was the content informative?

7 respondents (78%) stated that the content was informative, while 2 (22%) stated that it was not. Again, the numbers are small but a majority found it informative.

6.3 Having read the information we have published about our proposal, do you feel more informed about these?

5 respondents (52%) stated yes, 1 respondent (8%) stated no, while 6 (50%) stated partly.

6.4 Please indicate how you feel about the Strategy aims and proposals in general.

5 respondents (42%) agreed with the aims, 3 (25%) disagreed with the aims, and 4 respondents (33%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Comments received regarding the strategy's aims and proposals can be found under section 11 below with the Council's responses where necessary.

7.0 Social Media and Email Responses

7.1 During the consultation a number of posts were published on the Council's corporate Twitter (@NPTCouncil and @CyngorCnPT) and Facebook (Neath Port Talbot CBC and Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot) accounts to raise awareness of the consultation and encourage people to respond. These posts were monitored for comments on the draft policy proposals.

7.2 Of the comments made on posts about the draft strategy consultation, the following issues were raised via Facebook:

- "Please consider the relationship you have with your current housing provider who aren't interested in the safety of a child with a disability living in one of their unsafe properties."
- "Why is it the Council's responsibility to provide housing? Surely people should be able to look after themselves! There are so many in social housing that don't need it. You need to free up the stock you have."

- “So why are all the new houses being built on Princess Margaret Way all private? No social housing whatsoever.”
- “I hope to have a place of my own, this is positive news for me.”
- “Website needs to be more user friendly like Cornwall Homechoice. I’m not useless at computers but I’ve not been bidding because don’t understand the site.”
- “Delighted to hear of an active strategy to eliminate homelessness!”

8.0 Formal / Written Responses

- 8.1 One formal response was received from Welsh Government on an early draft of the strategy:

Generally the priorities are too broad and need to be more action focused to demonstrate the gaps/issues you are aiming to address and the cohorts/areas that you need to focus on.

The strategic priorities don’t seem to reflect the issues that we know that exist in the authority and have been raised in conversations with the Relationship Manager e.g. the lack of temporary accommodation, people with complex issues etc. The authority’s multi-discipline approach is also not clearly reflected in the strategic priorities.

Specifically:

- SP1 – There is a lot of detail underneath the priority but it needs to be made clearer the needs/gaps/issues that you are trying to address i.e. why is it a priority, and actions required to deliver the priority. Under ‘where we are going’ – it would be useful to explain the types of ‘services’ you are referring to.
- SP2 – This priority currently reads as a business as usual activity/a principle and not a strategic priority. The priority needs to be more action focused as it’s currently too broad (e.g. to strengthen, to enhance, to increase, to expand...). It seems to combine a number of needs/issues (multi-agency approach, Rapid Rehousing, working in partnership), therefore you may wish to have separate standalone priorities. The Strategy needs to include a specific priority around adopting a Rapid Rehousing Approach.

- SP3 – This priority currently reads as a business as usual/operational activity. Is this priority about strengthening access to support services through digital improvements? If so, we would suggest re-phrasing to ‘*Strengthening or improving access to support services...*’ We would question how the Homelessness Outcomes Framework and the HSG Outcomes data fits under this priority.
- SP4 – This priority reads as a business as usual/operational activity. We would expect effective commissioning to be part of the authority’s role and question if the needs assessment has identified this as an issue that needs to be addressed? The priority needs to be clearer about what the gaps/issues in service provision are and therefore where and why commissioning needs to be improved. What is not operating effectively?
- One of the priorities must be around your approach to targeted prevention as set out in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- We note that there are no references to any regional priorities.

Council’s response:

As a result of the feedback we have:

- Tightened our priorities making them more specific.
- Changed the ‘where we are going’ sections to ‘What we will do’ to make clear our intentions and actions to achieve the aims of the strategy.
- Added additional information into the ‘Statement of Need’ section and made available the technical document on request.
- Added a specific priority in relation to the Rapid Rehousing Approach and have tied actions more closely to our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan currently being developed.
- Changed a priority to “Strengthening or improving access to support services” and bolstered the actions under it.
- Included that we will continually review the services we commission to ensure quality standards are maintained and value for money is achieved.
- Included an aim to ensure that targeted homelessness prevention for high risk clients is available.
- Included an action in relation to the development and implementation of a regional strategy.

9.0 Petitions

9.1 The Council received no petitions relating to the Draft Strategy.

10.0 Council Response to the Consultation

10.1 The Council response to comments received is summarised below.

| Comments or questions raised on SNAP Survey and formal responses | | |
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| Please indicate the main reasons why you agree with the strategy aims and proposals: | | |
| Number | Comment: | Council response: |
| 1 | People need support to help themselves before it becomes a crisis. | One of the key objectives of the strategy will be to ensure services are available to deliver targeted prevention for high risk clients, including young people, ex-offenders, those with mental health issues and other complex needs. |
| 2 | Everyone should have a safe place to live including those that are currently housed in unsafe or inappropriate housing | One of the key objectives of the strategy will be to work with Private Sector Landlords, Social Housing Landlords and other partners to implement the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to provide more sustainable models of accommodation and support. |
| 3 | Homelessness in Neath Port Talbot is high at present and I agree that this strategy will benefit the community. Everyone should have a safe place to live, and removing homelessness will decrease the crime rate in Neath Port Talbot. I think it would benefit male victims of domestic abuse as a personal male family member is a | References in the strategy to "violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence" or "violence and abuse" intends to be read to capture all forms of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence. |

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| | high risk victim of domestic abuse and has been homeless since 5th March this year as there is no support for male victims. I hope you include this in your strategy that men are victims as well | |
| 4 | We need more houses for homeless and support | A key aim of the strategy is to work in collaboration with Registered Social Landlord partners to continue to increase the supply of suitable and affordable accommodation. |
| 5 | We need lots of different services to help people with their accommodation and other things like mental health, drug use and domestic abuse. These services need to be easy to access and provide support as long as needed. | A key priority for the Strategy is to strengthen or improve access to support services and that we will review all services using an evidence-based approach to ensure they meet the ambitions of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, and realign funding as necessary to better meet identified needs. |
| Please indicate the main reasons why you neither agree nor disagree with the strategy aims and proposals: | | |
| Number | Comment: | Council response: |
| 6 | I would like more information on evicting antisocial tenants who abuse the house they have, when many people, families can't get appropriate housing, due to a shortage | Processes regarding anti-social behaviour and evictions is outside the scope of this strategy. |
| 7 | Empty commercial premises throughout Neath and Port Talbot that should be refurbished to provide homes, bearing in mind that services are in place. It would surely be cheaper to add | Opportunities to explore bringing empty properties back into use will form part of the Rapid Rehousing Plan. |

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| | these properties to the housing stock by either compulsory purchase or grant aiding owners to bring properties up to the required standard. The added bonus would be that local businesses would benefit and that communities would not appear so "run down". | |
| 8 | What about young people, we need support. | The Strategy aims to support people aged 16 and over. One of the aims of the Strategy is to ensure services are available to deliver targeted prevention for high risk clients, including young people. |
| 9 | What I'm reading are very strong positive proposals and I'm sure there are people benefiting, however there are a growing number of people that are now becoming a nuisance within the community. They don't appear to be monitored, their complex needs don't appear to be attended to. | One of the aims of the Strategy is to ensure services are available to deliver targeted prevention for high risk clients, including young people, ex-offenders, those with mental health issues and other complex needs. |
| Please indicate the main reasons why you disagree with the strategy aims and proposals: | | |
| Number | Comment: | Council response: |
| 10 | Because it's more of the same tedious bureaucratic nonsense. | The publication of this strategy is a requirement of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. |
| 11 | Building affordable housing should have been a priority years ago. Instead of selling off land to | One of the key aims of the strategy is to work in collaboration with Registered Social |

| | the likes of persimmon, house/flats should have been built by the council for the people who are unable to get on the property market. | Landlord partners to continue to increase the supply of suitable and affordable accommodation. |
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| Any further comments about this consultation? | | |
| Number | Comment: | Council response: |
| 12 | Please revisit your relationship with your current housing provider who are not interested in providing safe accommodation to families with disabled children | One of the key aims of the strategy is to work with service users and stakeholders to implement mechanisms for co-production and engagement to inform the development of services. |
| 13 | The more you get involved, the more things go wrong. | The publication of this strategy is a requirement of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. |
| 14 | £4.3 million pounds to be spent tarting up Neath Port Talbot Council area. Quite remarkable really as the presentation of the borough should be the authority's responsibility. Sadly this issues is the consequence of not what the council does do but the result of what it does not do! For Example no proper schedule for grass cutting, no supervision of cleansing crews, Areas left to fall into disrepair eg car park in Gnoll Bank (never used) Grass cutting outside of Tarian Housing property, Bowling Green in Dyfed road, Water gullies not cleaned out, and so the list goes on. | The wider regeneration plan for Neath Port Talbot is outside the scope of this strategy. |

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| 15 | Please consider offering more support for male victims of domestic abuse | The Housing Support Grant currently funds a male domestic abuse outreach worker. One of the objectives of the strategy is to review all services using an evidence-based approach to ensure they meet the ambitions of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, and realign funding as necessary to better meet identified needs. |
| 16 | No | No response required. |
| 17 | All I have been able to read are proposals and plans, there are no results, budget and cost information provided. I cannot say if this is a successful strategy or not. All I can go on is what we see homeless housed in hotels, increased homeless population now spending their days around the town drinking heavily and littering our town. There are so many job opportunities available now what about education, what if we organised college classes to help them? How do they get their lives back on track, find a permanent address so they can apply for jobs? | <p>The document is a high level strategy outlining the aims and objectives of the Council and its partners. The Housing Support Grant Annual Update provides comprehensive information on referrals, service mapping and demand, clients' outcomes, service user surveys, funding streams and expenditure, commissioning activities and service developments, and is available on request. There will be a review in year two of the Strategy to assess progress and its impact.</p> <p>We will also look to ensure all staff are appropriately trained to deliver a high quality</p> |

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| | | trauma informed service that that is person centred and takes into account the specific needs and strengths of the clients. |
| 18 | It will be good to see what services are developed. | There will be a review in year two of the Strategy to assess progress and its impact. |