

Crawley Borough Council

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**Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission
Monday 7th April 2014**

**Report to Cabinet
Wednesday 9th April 2014**

Homelessness Strategy 2014 - 2019

Report of the Head of Strategic Housing and Planning Services – SHAP36

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This attached draft Homelessness Strategy 2014-2019 updates the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013. Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 imposes a legal duty on all local authorities to conduct a Review of Homelessness within their area and to then formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy to set out the Council's plans to address the identified gaps in provision and tackle the future issues that will affect the level of homelessness within the Borough in partnership with key stakeholders. This must be renewed at least every five years.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission consider the strategy and decide what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.

- 2.2 To the Cabinet

The Cabinet is recommended to request Full Council to approve the attached strategy for adoption and subsequent publication.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 To fulfil the Council's legal duty to publish a Homelessness Strategy on expiry of the previous document designed to demonstrate how the authority intends to prevent and address homelessness in the future.

4. Background

- 4.1 The adopted Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013 has now expired and a strategy to cover the period 2014 – 2019 is now required under section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002.

5. Description of Issue to be resolved

- The Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013 has expired and the Council is legally required to publish a Homelessness Strategy every five years showing how it intends to prevent and address homelessness
- The Homelessness Strategy 2014 – 2019 applies to all wards and all service users in Crawley

6. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

The Homeless Review 2014 and consultation process identified the key areas that the Council needs to address in tackling homelessness and these have been drawn together in the four key strategic objectives set out in the draft Homelessness Strategy:

- Provision of Advice, Prevention of Homelessness and Broader Services
- Supply of Affordable Housing
- Provision of Temporary Accommodation
- Discharging the Homeless Duty

Within these objectives, the actions that the council will need to take to achieve them have also been identified.

The consultation process sought the views of local organisations and partnership agencies that play a role in delivering homelessness services in Crawley, and sought feedback from people who have used the Council's homelessness service. The results of this consultation are detailed in sections 8 and 9 of the 2014 Review respectively.

7. Implications

Adoption of the Homelessness Strategy 2014 - 2019 and publication of this together with the Homeless Review 2014 fulfils the Council's statutory obligations. Any additional staffing requirements identified can be met initially from existing DCLG grant funding and will be on a fixed term contract basis. Where additional funding may be required to take forward specific initiatives, this will be identified and would be addressed through bids to the DCLG, funding from partners, reconfiguration of existing resources or through the Budget Advisory Group process in the form of bids for reinvestment of savings.

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and does not identify any action that needs to be taken as a result of the strategy.

8. Background Papers

[Homelessness Review 2014](#)

[Homelessness Act 2002: Chapter 7](#)

[Homelessness Code of Guidance issued to local authorities by CLG July 2006](#)

[s.153 Localism Act 2011](#)

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HOMELESSNESS

STRATEGY

2014 – 2019



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1. Aim of the Strategy

The Strategy forms part of Crawley Borough Council's response to its statutory duties under the Homelessness Act 2002, whereby all local authorities are required to conduct a review of homelessness in their district, then develop and publish a strategy setting out how services will be delivered to tackle homelessness.

2. Core Principles

As a service, we have identified the following core principles that underpin and guide the way we work:

- **PREVENTION** - Promoting change through early intervention and preventative action
- **SUSTAINABILITY** - Providing innovative, sustainable and affordable solutions
- **INTEGRATION** - Working with others to provide a holistic approach to homelessness
- **EMPOWERMENT** – Actively promoting and encouraging independent living
- **EQUALITY** – Treating everyone fairly and respecting their needs

3. Equality and Diversity

As an organisation we are committed to the principles of equality and diversity in the delivery of services. One of our organisational values is 'valuing diversity, inclusion and equality' and we work hard to ensure that equalities practices are embedded across the organisation and into our service areas. Equality means that everyone is treated fairly and in accordance with their individual needs. This does not necessarily mean that people experience the same treatment, but that the treatment will lead to fair outcomes. Diversity means valuing and embracing people in terms of their background and for the differences, skills, abilities and experiences they bring into the workforce and in the wider community.

4. Strategic Objectives

The strategy was developed and informed by a comprehensive review of services in consultation with our partners, stakeholders and service users. The Homelessness Review 2014 identified key issues that have been developed into strategic objectives, setting out how the Council intends to address homelessness in the Borough over the next five years.

Strategic Objective 1 – Provision of advice, prevention of homelessness and broader services

<i>Aim – To provide timely and accurate information, advice and assistance to enable people to resolve their housing difficulties without becoming homeless.</i>
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Strategic Objective 2 – Supply of affordable housing

<i>Aim – To provide information, advice and assistance to enable people to access and sustain accommodation that is affordable to them.</i>

Strategic Objective 3 – Temporary accommodation
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<i>Aim – To minimise the use of temporary accommodation where possible but to plan for and develop a flexible and diverse portfolio of temporary accommodation that meets short, medium and long term needs when it is required.</i>
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Strategic Objective 4 – Discharging the homeless duty
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<i>Aim – To utilise all options available for discharging the homeless duty</i>

NB. Cabinet formally adopted the Policy to discharge Crawley's homelessness duties into the private rented sector in March 2013 as introduced by the Localism Act 2011.

5. Action Plan

In order to assist us to achieve our strategic objectives, an action plan has been drawn up to identify key actions that will contribute towards fulfilling the objectives. The expected outcome will show what we expect successfully completing that action will look like.

Strategic Objective 1	Provision of advice and prevention of homelessness
<i>Aim – To provide timely and accurate information, advice and assistance to enable people to resolve their housing difficulties without becoming homeless.</i>	
Actions:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on projects and early interventions through partnership and multi-agency working to ensure those that are at risk of homelessness are identified quickly and receive early specialist advice and support to sustain their current accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation that is affordable and sustainable and prevents homelessness. 2. Encourage the development of effective support services to empower customers to resolve their housing difficulties and sustain stable accommodation. 3. Evolve council services to work efficiently and effectively as demands increase and financial resources diminish with a continued focus on prevention initiatives. 4. Support financial inclusion and access to regulated and ethical lending services such as the Credit Union. 5. Ensure the effects of ongoing welfare reforms are understood and develop appropriate responses to ensure understanding by those affected and their options to plan for the long term. 6. Consider alternatives to the Mortgage Rescue Scheme which ends on the 31st March 2014 to assist homeowners. 7. Review the 'Safe At Home Scheme' to ensure that those at risk of violence can choose to remain safely in their home where appropriate rather than be forced to move. 8. Develop services under the 'No Second Night Out' agenda to single rough sleepers to whom the council may have no statutory duty to provide accommodation but who will be 	

severely affected by sleeping rough and who impact upon wider agencies and communities.	
Outcome and deadlines:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in homeless preventions (as a percentage of approaches to the Council) • West Sussex Credit Union to continue to be co-located and offer their services within Crawley to aid and facilitate homeless prevention • Welfare reforms are communicated and understood by the public so that they take the necessary action to prevent becoming homeless and sustain accommodation. 	
Partnership agencies: Social Services, Crawley Youth Homelessness Partnership, Citizens Advice Bureau, Probation Service, Housing Benefit, West Sussex Credit Union	Progress update:

Strategic Objective 2	Supply of affordable housing
<i>Aim – To increase the supply of affordable housing across all tenure types to enable people to access and sustain accommodation that is affordable to them.</i>	
Actions:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation to prevent homelessness and discharge the homeless duty into the private rented sector as introduced by the Localism Act 2011. 2. Corporately increase the supply of housing across all tenure types within the borough. 	
Outcome and deadlines:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of private rented properties available to prevent homelessness or discharge the homelessness duty into • Additional numbers of affordable housing in Crawley that is available to customers 	
Partnership agencies: Registered social landlords, Registered Providers, Crawley Borough Council, Local Developers, Local Estate Agents and Local Landlords	Progress update:

Strategic Objective 3	Temporary accommodation
<i>Aim – To minimise the use of temporary accommodation where possible but plan for and develop a flexible and diverse portfolio of accommodation that is able to meet changeable short, medium and long term needs when it is required.</i>	
Actions:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extend and develop a varied and flexible portfolio of temporary accommodation to enable the council to fulfil its statutory duties where required 2. Minimise the use of unsuitable and expensive bed & breakfast type accommodation 	
Outcome and deadlines:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased portfolio of flexible temporary accommodation options • Reduce the use of nightly paid bed and breakfast type accommodation • Reduce the overall temporary accommodation costs to the Council 	
Partnership agencies: Local landlords, Registered Providers, Crawley Homes, Local Accommodation Providers	Progress update:

Strategic Objective 4	Discharging the homeless duty
<i>Aim – To utilise all options available for discharging the homeless duty</i>	
Actions:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discharge the homelessness duty by way of Private Rented Sector Offers (PRSO) 2. Participate and feed into the reviews and consultation on the Council’s Allocations Policy to ensure that those in greatest need to access social housing are able to do so. 	
Outcome:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of Private Rented Sector Offers (PRSO) successfully completed • Increased number of allocations made to prevent homelessness and negate the need to make a homeless application 	
Partnership agencies: Local landlords, Local Estate Agents, Registered Providers	Progress update:

6. Monitoring and Review

To ensure that we remain on target to meet our strategic objectives and to enable us to assess where we are and make changes as necessary, annual progress meetings will be held and the action plan will be updated accordingly. The revised action plan may be published as an addendum to the strategy and made available on the Council's website. Minor amendments to the strategy will be made where necessary under delegated powers by the Head of Strategic Housing and Planning Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing.