

**Meeting:** Integrated Housing Board

**Date:** 26 June 2008

**Report Title:** Development of Haringey's Homelessness Strategy 2008 -11

**Report of:** Director of the Urban Environment

### **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Integrated Housing Board with some background information on the work that is being undertaken to develop Haringey's Homelessness Strategy 2008-11.

At its meeting on 26 June 2008, the Board will receive a comprehensive presentation, setting out the keys issues. Members of the Board will then be invited to indicate the priorities they would like addressed in the new Strategy.

### **Recommendations**

That the Integrated Housing Board notes the work that is being done to develop Haringey's Homelessness Strategy and identifies which issues and priorities it would like to be reflected in the new Strategy.

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### **Background**

- 3.1 Haringey's first five year Homelessness Strategy was published in 2003.
- 3.2 Work is ongoing to complete a comprehensive review of homelessness and produce a new three year multi agency Strategy by 31 July 2008 in accordance with the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002.

- 3.3 A multi agency Steering Group is meeting fortnightly to inform the homelessness review and oversee the development of the Homelessness Strategy.
- 3.4 The successful and timely implementation of the new Homelessness Strategy, with its SMART action plan, will be monitored by a multi agency Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group which will meet quarterly.

### **Strategic and Community Housing Services**

- 3.5 With an emphasis on Homelessness prevention, early intervention and housing options, the Council's Housing Service is being re-organised to create a private sector lettings team that will work with private landlords to secure affordable, good quality, well managed private rented accommodation.
- 3.6 The new staffing structure will provide the impetus for the integration and co-location of services (including the Private Sector Housing team which has recently moved to Housing from Enforcement) and support the development of new partnerships including a new, multi agency homeless households support service.
- 3.7 Other changes include the creation of separate Housing Advice and Housing Options teams that will prevent homelessness, develop and promote a range of viable housing options, and provide a comprehensive housing advice service (incorporating an outreach service) for everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- 3.8 Ensuring that people are at the heart of change, the Housing Service is proposing to hold regular focus groups with service users, including residents of temporary accommodation. Service users will become increasingly involved in shaping, monitoring and improving the housing and support services they receive.

### **Working with registered social landlords**

- 3.9 The Housing Corporation's selection of Haringey as one of just three areas in which to pilot the development of **area based homelessness action plans** affords the opportunity for the Council to work more collaboratively with RSL's to tackle homelessness and meet urgent housing need.
- 3.10 It is envisaged that Haringey's area based homelessness action plan will complement the new homelessness strategy and that the project will provide an additional impetus for the RSL's to work in partnership with the Council to tackle and reduce homelessness more effectively in Haringey.
- 3.11 In the short term, it is hoped that the pilot project will improve the efficiency and transparency of everyone's processes and ensure that the Council receives all of the tenancy nominations to which it is entitled. In the long term, it is hoped that the project will lead to the

introduction of a Common Housing Register and the letting of all social housing through the choice based lettings scheme.

- 3.12 Most importantly, the pilot project will provide further evidence of Haringey's 'whole borough' approach to homelessness, support the improvement of the Council's Housing Service and make a significant contribution to the implementation of Haringey's new Homelessness Strategy.

### ***Temporary accommodation***

- 3.13 At the beginning of June 2008, Haringey had 5,200 homeless households (including almost 8,000 young people under the age of 16) living in temporary accommodation. About 20% of this accommodation is located outside of Haringey.
- 3.14 Due to the severe shortage of family sized homes, families will often have to remain in temporary accommodation for between 6 and 7 years before being offered a three or four-bedroom council home.
- 3.15 It is widely acknowledged that homeless people are more likely to suffer from poor physical, mental and emotional health than the rest of the population, and ill health is often associated with poverty and homelessness. Studies have shown consistently that the experience of homelessness and living in temporary accommodation can exacerbate existing problems and disadvantage households in a number of ways.
- 3.16 These disadvantages can include the quality and type of accommodation in which homeless households are placed, the disruption to social and other support networks and the negative impact on the education, health and well-being of homeless households and their children.
- 3.17 Homeless households suffer health inequalities compared to the general population and, for children; there is a greater likelihood of illness, poor diet, behavioural problems and delayed development.
- 3.18 Children living in 'homeless households' are more likely to be entitled to free school meals, to have special educational needs, to have English as an additional language, to need higher levels of support in learning English and be more frequently absent from school.
- 3.19 Mobile pupils are more likely at age 7 to be 15-20% behind the expected levels of the peers in reading, writing and mathematics.
- 3.20 The timing and circumstances of pupil movement has an important influence on attainment. Living in a homeless household will impact on all areas of the children's school life and will ultimately affect their future life chances.
- 3.21 The council is committed to helping every learner in school to be able to fulfil their potential and to have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

3.22 The Council is committed to halving the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation (to 2,600) by the year 2010 and this is reflected in Haringey's Local Area Agreement (National Indicator 156).

### **Key strategic priorities**

3.23 The development of the new homelessness strategy affords Haringey an excellent opportunity to set out its vision for preventing homelessness, tackling the causes of homelessness, meeting the housing and support needs of homeless people, and halving the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation.

3.24 Although consultation is continuing, the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group has proposed **9 key strategic priorities**, expressed in the form of commitments:

- We will actively support and promote a partnership approach to tackling homelessness;
- We will invest in early intervention and effective homelessness prevention;
- We will increase the supply of affordable homes;
- We will provide choice and encourage independence;
- We will halve, by 2010, the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation
- We will improve the quality and suitability of temporary accommodation;
- We will improve customer service, involvement and satisfaction;
- We will ensure that our policies and procedures are fair, transparent and easily understood; and
- We will work proactively to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

3.25 The transformation of the Council's Prevention and Options Service into a Housing Advice and Options Service that provides specialist advice on all aspects of housing represents a significant change.

3.26 With its emphasis on early intervention and solution finding, the new service will be dynamic, proactive and responsive. Working with other advice and support providers (and a new rent deposit scheme) it will also help single, non-priority homeless people to access private rented accommodation.

3.27 A lot of work is still required to respond effectively to the housing and support needs of care leavers and other young people. Preliminary discussions about this matter have taken place with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. It is important that Haringey learns from the good practice of other local authorities.

- 3.28 Concerns about access arrangements and the supply of supported housing has prompted a call for a comprehensive audit of all supported housing in the borough. It is hoped that, once complete, the audit will enable Haringey to make better use of the accommodation and to identify unmet needs, particularly for substance misusers and people affected by mental ill-health.
- 3.29 As rough sleeping has increased significantly during the past year (particularly amongst migrant workers) urgent action is required to establish an assertive outreach team to help people off the streets and address any concerns about community safety.
- 3.30 In order to achieve the required reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation, a greater proportion of lettings will need to go to homeless households. Consideration will also need to be given to the introduction of automatic bidding for those households who have enough points to make a successful bid, but are simply not bidding.

From the experience gained during a recent pilot scheme, it is evident that many households who have lived in temporary accommodation for a very long time will require help in adjusting to the fact that they will be moving into settled accommodation. Consideration should be given to the provision of additional funding to voluntary and community sector organisations who are already working with (and advising) such residents and/or the prioritisation of Supporting People floating support services for this purpose.

### **Strategic Implications**

- 4.1 Haringey's homelessness strategy will support the delivery of a wide range of strategies and action plans by helping to address some of the most pressing issues facing the borough, including child poverty, community safety, low educational attainment, health inequalities, poor housing conditions, Worklessness and, of course, the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation.
- 4.2 For the homelessness strategy to be effective its development must be inclusive and there must be a multi-agency commitment to its successful and timely implementation.
- 4.3 Endorsement by the Haringey Strategic Partnership, together with the appointment of Homelessness Champions, will ensure that the strategy is owned by all of the stakeholders and that it contributes positively to

the implementation of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the achievement of the targets in the LAA.

- 4.4 Partnership, innovation, empowerment, choice and opportunity will be recurrent themes throughout the homelessness strategy, as will tenancy sustainment, early intervention and prevention. Tackling Worklessness, anti social behaviour and child poverty will also feature prominently within the strategy.
- 4.5 The action plan will include a series of measures to improve homeless households' access to training, work placement, employment and specialist advice on in-work benefits and tax credits.
- 4.6 The key documents and strategies used to support the development of the new homelessness strategy include the following:
  - Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2016
  - Local Area Agreement
  - Housing Strategy (revised version) 2007-2008
  - Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008
  - Supporting People Strategy 2005 – 2010
  - Safer Communities Strategy & Anti Social Behaviour Strategy
  - Children and Young People Plan 2006 – 2009
  - Diversity and Equality Framework
  - London Housing Strategy 2007-2010
  - Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

## **5. Equalities Implications**

- 5.1 An impact assessment is being undertaken as part of the development of the new homelessness strategy.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 A substantial amount of consultation has already taken place with Council staff, residents of temporary accommodation, advice services, support providers and a wide range of other stakeholders.
- 6.2 Further consultation will take place when the draft strategy is complete.