

Meeting: Well-Being Strategic Partnership Board

Date: 8 December 2008

Report Title: Haringey's Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 11

Report of: Director of Urban Environment

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with details of Haringey's new Homelessness Strategy and how it is to be implemented.

Summary

Given the impact that homelessness is having on the health, educational attainment, life chances and well-being of the residents of Haringey, tackling homelessness is one of the biggest challenges facing the borough.

This three year, multi agency strategy sets out how the Council and its partners will work together to prevent homelessness, tackle the causes of homelessness and provide better outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Haringey is committed to halving the number of households in temporary accommodation by the year 2010. This strategy will play a significant part in helping us to achieve that target.

With its ambitious Action Plan, the strategy supports many of the key objectives in the Well-Being Strategic Framework and has the potential to completely transform Haringey's housing and homelessness services.

Legal / Financial Implications

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on all local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness and produce a homelessness strategy at least once every five years.

The strategy is required to set out how the Council proposes to:

- (a) prevent homelessness in the Borough;
- (b) secure that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the Borough who are or may become homeless;
- (c) secure the satisfactory provision of support for people in the Borough who:

- (i) are or may become homeless; or
- (ii) have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

The legislation does also allow the Council to pursue specific localised objectives and actions. The report sets out the specific areas covered by the strategy.

In common with many other local authorities, Haringey produced its last, 5 year Homelessness Strategy in July 2003. The new Homelessness Strategy had to be approved and published by 31 July 2008.

Haringey's new Homelessness Strategy 2008-11, published in July 2008, complements the Temporary Accommodation Reduction Plan 2008-10 which sets out how the Council is planning to reduce the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation to 2,600 by March 2010.

Consideration has been given to the financial implications of the Homelessness Strategy, and most of the planned improvements and initiatives can be delivered within existing budgets. Where detailed assessment and costing of proposals indicate that extra investment is needed, funding will be sought from Communities and Local Government Department as appropriate and, if required, it will be considered as part of the Council's financial planning process. The proposed improvements and initiatives which require additional resources will not be undertaken until funding has been clearly identified and approved.

The Government is intending to change the current Housing Benefit subsidy arrangements from 2010/11. Although the potential financial impact of these changes has been taken into account in the Council's medium term financial strategy (and reflects the proposed reduction in the use of temporary accommodation), the exact financial implications will need to be evaluated and costed when full details of the new subsidy arrangements are announced in 2009.

Recommendations

That the Board notes this report and supports the objectives and implementation of Haringey's Homelessness Strategy 2008-11.

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Background

Haringey's Homelessness Strategy 2008-11 provides the necessary framework and impetus for effective partnership working and the delivery of efficiently managed and co-ordinated services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homelessness.

It supports the Sustainable Community Strategy and the delivery of the Local Area Agreement by helping to address some of the most pressing issues facing the borough, including child poverty, community safety, educational attainment, health inequalities, poor housing conditions, Worklessness and the planned reduction in the use of temporary accommodation.

Development of the Homelessness Strategy has afforded the opportunity for Haringey to review how effective it has been in tackling homelessness and to assess how well equipped it is to meet future needs.

Unlike most other local authorities, Haringey has chosen to produce a three year Homelessness Strategy. As well as ensuring that everyone focuses on the task in hand, the three year timescale reflects the fact that, in halving the Council's use of temporary accommodation (from 5,200 to 2,600) by the year 2010, the Strategy will transform not just the housing situation in Haringey but also the quality and effectiveness of partnerships.

The Strategy emphasises the need for early intervention, homelessness prevention and partnership. It also seeks to reduce people's reliance on the homelessness legislation and social housing to meet their housing needs.

Development of the Homelessness Strategy has been inclusive and there is widespread multi agency support for ensuring that it is implemented successfully. The appointment of Homelessness Champions, together with the endorsement of the Integrated Housing Board, has ensured that the Homelessness Strategy is owned by stakeholders.

Links to the Well-Being Strategic Framework

The Homelessness Strategy will contribute to the achievement of many of the key priorities in the Well-Being Strategic Framework:

- **Improved health and emotional well-being**
(Improve mental health)
- **Improved quality of life**
(Increase opportunities for people to live independently in their own homes)
- **Making a positive contribution**
(Create opportunities for having a say in decision making; Promote user involvement and engagement in service commissioning and delivery)
- **Increased choice and control**
(Develop housing related support services for vulnerable people)

- **Freedom from discrimination or harassment**
(Provide services in a fair, transparent and consistent way; Prevent and reduce domestic violence; Prevent and reduce hate crime and harassment)
- **Economic well-being**
(Increase the numbers moving from worklessness into employment; Prevent homelessness wherever possible; Maximise the supply of good quality affordable housing available to homeless people; Ensure that vulnerable people have decent, energy efficient homes)

Key strategic objectives

The Homelessness Strategy 2008-11 identifies **nine key strategic objectives** that meet local and national strategic priorities, and focus on service delivery and improvement.

Expressed as a set of stakeholder commitments, the nine key objectives describe Haringey's aspirations and how they will be achieved:

- (1) We will actively support and promote a partnership approach to preventing homelessness
- (2) We will invest in early intervention and effective homelessness prevention
- (3) We will increase the supply of affordable homes
- (4) We will provide choice and encourage independence
- (5) We will halve, by March 2010, the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation
- (6) We will improve the quality and suitability of temporary accommodation
- (7) We will work proactively to safeguard children and vulnerable adults
- (8) We will improve customer service, involvement and satisfaction
- (9) We will ensure that our policies and procedures are fair, transparent and widely understood

Implementation of the Homelessness Strategy

Responsibility for ensuring the successful and timely implementation of the strategy will rest with the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group that comprises key stakeholders and reports to the Integrated Housing Board.

The primary mechanism for delivering the actions in the Action Plan will be the nine themed delivery groups:

- Communications

- Partnership
- Customer Experience
- Children, Young People and Families
- Vulnerable Adults
- Homelessness Prevention and Tenancy Sustainment
- Housing Options
- Temporary Accommodation
- Training, Education and Skills

Each delivery group has its own terms of reference and is accountable for ensuring that those parts of the Action Plan that are allocated to them are implemented successfully and on time.

Complementing the work of the Council's own Service Improvement Groups, the delivery groups will produce a short delivery plan for each part of the Action Plan. Membership will reflect Haringey's multi agency approach to tackling homelessness.

A fresh approach

Haringey's new Homelessness Strategy demands a fresh approach to the way in which everyone in the borough tackles and prevents homelessness.

With its emphasis on multi agency working, implementation of the Homelessness Strategy will ensure that all of the key issues are discussed and addressed.

To make a meaningful impact on the number of homeless people who are not in education, employment or training, homelessness services will be aligned with Jobcentre Plus, the employment advisers and the Haringey Guarantee.

The creation of a homeless households support service (comprising the network of people whose work involves regular contact with homeless people in temporary accommodation) will ensure that service users receive consistent messages and are kept fully informed about services, initiatives and their move-on options.

More than ever before, service users will be actively consulted and involved in designing, monitoring and improving the services provided for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Conclusion

With its ambitious Action Plan, the Homelessness Strategy has the potential to completely transform Haringey's housing and homelessness services.

Given the impact that homelessness is having on the health, educational attainment, life chances and well-being of Haringey's residents, it is essential that everyone in the borough assists its implementation.

Appendices

Appendix: Homelessness Strategy 2008-11

As stated on the agenda front sheet, the Strategy can be obtained via this link, to the Council's website:

http://harinet.haringey.gov.uk/homelessness_strategy.pdf