

Report Title: Homelessness Strategy

Report of: Interim Director of Adult, Culture and Community Services

Wards(s) affected: All

Report for: Key

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide information on the Council's priority areas for action in relation to homelessness for 2007/08.
- 1.2 It also provides background information on how we intend to prepare for the development of a new Homelessness Strategy for 2008-2012

2. Introduction by Executive Member (if necessary)

- 2.1 The Executive of Haringey Council is very strongly committed to reducing homelessness and the number of households in temporary accommodation. It aims to both prevent homelessness, but where necessary provide for a short period high quality temporary accommodation.
- 2.2 The council adopted in 2003 a 5 year Homeless Strategy. Although there is no legal requirement for producing a new strategy until 2008, a number of developments since 2003 (in particular the establishment of the council's Prevention & Options mechanisms, the government's TA reduction targets and the significant increases in demand, amongst others) dictate the need for an interim revision of the current strategy, for the last of its 5 year span.
- 2.3 In parallel the magnitude of the challenge facing the borough in terms of housing stress dictates the need for a constant search for new mechanisms and initiatives in this field, in order to ensure that the next 5 year strategy is ambitious enough to meet this challenge. Some of these initiatives would require long lead-in timescales, in terms of research, lobbying, partnership working and feasibility studies. It is therefore intended that the proposed interim one year strategy, forms the starting point for a year-long development and consultation phase towards the next 5 year strategy of the authority.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Executive endorses our approach to undertaking the homelessness review and developing a new strategy.
- 3.2 That Executive note the priority actions for 2007/08 and the continued need to develop the Action Plan in the light of consultation with the Team at the DCLG.

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4. Director of Finance Comments

- 4.1 The Government has set all local authorities the target of reducing the numbers of households in temporary accommodation (TA) by 50% by March 2010. This is a particular challenge for Haringey as the Council currently has the highest number of households in TA in the country. The majority of these are placed in leased or licensed accommodation either as non-secure tenants of the Council or via housing associations as assured shorthold tenants (AST).
- 4.2 Plans are in place to extend services aimed at reducing the amount of people requiring TA in the first place and reducing the number of repeat homelessness applications through its Options and Prevention Service. There are cost implications associated with this proposal and additional resources are in place to support these extended initiatives.
- 4.3 The approved budget for 2007/08 and future years assumes a planned reduction in numbers in temporary accommodation.
- 4.4 The government have reduced the rent thresholds and caps by 5% for 2007/08 and hence the Council's income. This has been provided for within the approved budget. Further reductions in government subsidy will place at risk the Council's ability to meet the temporary accommodation reduction targets.

5. Head of Legal Services Comments

- 5.1 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted in the preparation of this report.
- 5.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

6.1 Haringey Homelessness Strategy, 2003 – 08

6.2 Homelessness Act, 2002

7. Strategic Implications

- 7.1 The production of a Homelessness Strategy is a requirement for each local authority. Given the levels of housing need and homelessness in Haringey, it is one of our key strategic documents. Our progress in addressing homelessness and achieving the reduction in levels of temporary accommodation required by 2010 is critical for the Council and to the lives of many of the borough's residents.
- 7.2 It has been indicated that the Homelessness Strategy and delivery against the 2010 target will become more important in the CPA.
- 7.3 The reduction in levels of homelessness and its impacts are important for the achievement of broader Council objectives, particularly in relation to community stability and cohesion, education and aspects of regeneration.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 The delivery of some aspects of the proposed Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will require additional resources and these have been identified and put in place as part of the budget process. They are being used to fund priority areas including the provision of additional visiting resources and the establishment of a defined homelessness prevention budget.
- 8.2 Further future changes to the subsidy regime, in addition to the 5% reduction in 2007/08, in relation to temporary accommodation will have a significant impact on the Council and its ability to meet the TA reduction target.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 There are none.

10. Equalities Implications

- 10.1 Over 90% of the households, who approach the Council as homeless are from BME communities. Improvements to service delivery and an emphasis on prevention and options will mean that we avoid households entering temporary accommodation wherever possible. However, it is important to ensure that this approach is sensitive to the needs of all households and that all communities have equal access to the choices and options available. Robust monitoring systems are critical to ensure that no one is disadvantaged.

- 10.2 Many of the households, who approach us for assistance, have support needs. This may be a short term need to help them deal with the crisis that has led to homelessness or a longer term need, sometimes as a result of a physical disability, illness, mental health needs or age. The delivery of adequate support, either through the provision of supported housing or more often through floating support services is an important part of our action plan. Specific support is available to survivors of domestic violence through Hearthstone.

11. Consultation

- 11.1 The current Homelessness Strategy, 2003 – 08 was subject to extensive consultation as detailed in the Strategy document.
- 11.2 Additional consultation was carried out when the Prevention and Options Service was being developed and there has been consultation on specific schemes that are being offered as housing options.
- 11.3 The proposed Action Plan for 2007 – 08 will be discussed with partners at the Homelessness Forum and there have been initial discussions on direction with the DCLG.
- 11.4 Section 12.8 details our approach to the development of the new Homelessness Strategy.

12. Background

- 12.1 The Homelessness Act, 2002 placed a statutory duty on councils to carry out a homelessness review and develop a homelessness strategy. The first strategy had to be produced by July 2003 and a new one is required by July 2008.
- 12.2 Since we developed our current Homelessness Strategy, there have been a number of changes both internally and externally, which impact on our approach and as a result the required actions. Key changes include the reworking of our homelessness and advice services to deliver Preventions and Options Service and the introduction of the 2010 temporary accommodation reduction target.
- 12.3 At January 31 2007 there were 5,903 households living in temporary accommodation. This is a reduction of 6 households over the previous month. The key point however is that the upward trend has been stopped. The un-audited figures for February 2007 point to a larger drop in number. The Council has worked closely with the Homelessness Directorate at the DCLG, who are monitoring our progress closely. The upward trend has been reversed and the number of households in temporary accommodation has reduced. A challenging Temporary Accommodation target has been set for 2007/8.
- 12.4 The one year update to the Homelessness Strategy will include:
- a brief summary introduction on progress to date
 - key priorities for the coming year
 - an action plan, which concentrates on:
 - the setting of a targets to deliver temporary accommodation reduction

- actions that move us towards achieving the 2010 Temporary Accommodation Reduction target
 - actions showing how we intend to prepare for and deliver a new Homelessness Strategy, 2008 – 2012 will be included in the Action Plan.
- 12.5 The DCLG visited Haringey on 4th December 2006 and have endorsed our approach and will work with us continuing to ensure that the strategy will be robust and the Action Plan with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, resource defined and time specific).
- 12.6 The DCLG have recently developed a 'tool kit', which they recommend that councils use to test whether their Homelessness Strategy and Temporary Accommodation Reduction Action plans are robust. We have completed this exercise and used it to produce a gaps analysis, which has informed our decisions on priority actions for the coming years.

Priorities for 2007/08

- 12.7 Working to the delivery of the 2010 temporary accommodation target is the main priority and consists of 5 main areas of activity:
- (i) Prevention activity to reduce the numbers entering the system and temporary accommodation. We are working to ensure that our approach to prevention is robust and challenging and enables as many people as possible to remain in their current accommodation. Key actions in this area include:
- Review of our mediation service and selection of a new partner organisation
 - Greater emphasis on visiting
 - Use of prevention fund - £100,000 agreed for 2007/08
 - Expansion of Hearthstone and further increase in number of Sanctuary schemes delivered
 - Delivery of the new Lettings Policy and the Allocations Quota in relation to homelessness
 - Work with Homes for Haringey to reduce the number of management transfers and with RSLs to avoid section 8 evictions
 - Development of a Moving on strategy
 - Strengthening of the Vulnerable Adults Team, with a particular emphasis on a partnership approach to prevention, including:
 - work on clear protocols with organisations including Probation, the PCT, the and Mental Health Trust
 - ensuring that maximum use is made of supported housing provision and that move on options are available
 - that floating support has a maximum impact on homelessness prevention
 - working with other services to ensure that we minimise the impact of homelessness on educational achievement, worklessness and health.
- (ii) Legal propriety and robust action on fraud. Key actions in this area include:
- Delivery of a programme of temporary accommodation occupancy checks followed by strong action where a property is not occupied or is sub let.
 - Action on any applications found to be fraudulent
 - Further strengthening of internal processes and procedures

- (iii) Development of alternative housing options. Key actions in this area include:
- Delivery of existing schemes to secure assured shorthold tenancies:
 - Accredited Lettings Scheme will deliver 300 units in 2007/08 and subsequent years
 - Haringey Homes Direct will deliver a further 300 units per year.
 - New schemes are being developed as the market and negotiations allow, including a scheme with Notting Hill Housing Trust.(HHHT) (This is a partnership scheme with HNHT procuring Assured Shorthold Tenancies for homeless households. This pilot aims to secure 50 new homes.)
- (iv) Delivery of affordable and intermediate housing options and maximisation of existing stock. Key actions in this area include:
- Delivery of housing development programme
 - Work on overcrowding including the development of a strategy to address overcrowding
 - Review of under occupation incentives
 - Further encouragement of mobility options
 - Action on empty homes
- (v) Conversion of existing units of temporary accommodation into assured shorthold tenancies. Negotiations will take place with landlords at lease end in an attempt to secure assured shorthold tenancies rather than leases as TA. Our planned actions for delivering the TA target are contained in a project plan and delivery is monitored through the Well Being Partnership Board. Delivery of the key actions needed is dependent on the availability of additional resources and the action plan will need to be reviewed as resourcing arrangements are agreed.

12.8 Preparing for the development of a new Homelessness Strategy for 2008 – 2012, will involve the following actions:

- (i) Extending our Homelessness Forum arrangements to ensure it can act as an effective challenging consultative forum.
- (ii) Setting up a Homelessness Strategy steering group, which includes key stakeholders. This will start meeting in January 2007.
- (iii) Undertaking a comprehensive homelessness review, which will inform the Strategy. This is a statutory responsibility and needs to include the following areas:
 - The levels and likely future levels of homelessness in Haringey
 - The needs of homeless people
 - The main routes into homelessness locally
 - Current provision for homeless people including temporary accommodation, permanent accommodation, support and preventative services
- (iv) Organising a Homelessness Event to consult on proposals for the way forward. The DCLG have stated their commitment to supporting us with such an event, including arranging a key note speaker.
- (v) Ensuring the opportunity for effective service user involvement in the development of the Strategy.

13. Conclusion

13.1 Addressing homelessness and achieving the 2010 Temporary Accommodation targets are key issues for the borough. Having an effective Homelessness Strategy Action Plan in place is critical to achieving success.

13.2 The priorities highlighted reflect those actions, which will take us forward in reducing temporary accommodation use and providing a firm strategic base for delivery.

14. Use of Appendices / Tables / Photographs

14.1 An Action Plan is attached at **Annex A**. This Action Plan will be amended further to reflect the outcome of the on-going liaison between the Council and Department of Communities and Local Government.

14.2 The Action Plan will be implemented in conjunction with the local Homelessness Forum and the DCLG.

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

2007-2008

Introduction

This Action Plan sets out a programme of work that will continue the effective implementation of the final year of the Homelessness Strategy 2003-8. The Aims and Objectives of the Strategy remain relevant for this Action Plan –

- To deliver high quality services that meet the needs of those who are homeless or facing homelessness
- To ensure a comprehensive approach to homelessness prevention and support
- To develop a comprehensive temporary accommodation strategy that meets the needs of homeless households and the community
- To maximise affordable housing supply and develop alternative housing options
- To ensure that there is an integrated response to homelessness in Haringey and that agencies work together to provide services to promote the well being of individuals in the community
- To achieve a reliable and comprehensive knowledge and information system as a basis for delivering our homelessness strategy

There is a strong link to related strategies and initiatives such as the Equalities & Diversity Framework and the Private Sector Housing Strategy. The links to wider community issues such as sustainability, employment and training are acknowledged within the Action Plan.

However the Action Plan takes a pragmatic view of what can be achieved in the final year and pulls together initiatives and targets under 4 themes and priorities-

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| Priority 1 | Preventing Homelessness |
| Priority 2 | Maximising the supply of good quality affordable housing |

- Priority 3 Reducing the numbers in Temporary Accommodation
 Priority 4 Establishing robust partnership arrangements

This Action Plan takes an overview of the key targets and initiatives and is a key tool for monitoring progress. A range of performance monitoring at a team level underpin the ongoing review of progress. Many actions will be reviewed at SMT level on a monthly basis, but overall progress will be reviewed quarterly. It is acknowledged that the Action Plan will need to be developed and enhanced during its lifetime.

The Action Plan builds upon the significant initiatives and new approaches to tackling social housing in the Borough, in particular:

- The Prevention and Options Service (P&O)
- Home Connections

It takes forward the policy commitment to reduce the use of temporary accommodation. It builds upon discussions with DCLG, incorporates good practice from elsewhere and takes a pragmatic approach to recent trends and challenges. It builds upon the gaps analysis undertaken using the DCLG toolkit.

This Action Plan is very much a bridge between the current Homelessness Strategy and the creation of a new strategy. It also lays the ground for reviewing the approach to homelessness and a new strategy in 2008. The actions have been discussed with key stakeholders who will be involved in ongoing monitoring during the year. The Homelessness Forum will take an active part in shaping the consultation and involvement arrangements for a Homelessness Review and the creation of a new 5 year strategy in 2008.

Who

AT	Alev Theobald	Rehousing Manager
DG	Denise Gandy	Head of Strategy and Performance
HB	Hilda Bond	Prevention and Options Manager
MB	Mark Billings	Homelessness Manager
MC	Mel Cant	Housing Procedures Manager
RB	Rupert Brandon	Head of Housing Supply

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Priority One: Preventing homelessness arising wherever possible

REF	OUTCOME	HOW PERFORMANCE WILL BE ASSESSED	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	LEAD	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
1.1	Consolidate the performance and implementation of the Prevention & Options Service	SMT monthly review TA Reduction Project Group Corporate Wellbeing sub group	Officer time	DG	Q1	
1.2	Establish the role of the P&O Visiting Officers by visiting priority applicants and improve the decision making process. Target 1300 visits by the end of Q1, with all 16/17 years olds first	SMT monthly review TA Reduction Project Group Corporate Wellbeing sub group	Officers in post (4)	HB	Q1	
1.3	Make full use of Spend to Save TA reduction fund	SMT monthly review TA Reduction Project Group Corporate Wellbeing sub group	£250k from Corporate funds (+£100k Homelessness grant)	DG	Q1	

1.4	Employ 2 Housing Benefit Advisers to provide targeted advice to reduce the numbers of failed ASTs. Target of reviewing and supporting 150 cases with debt.	Appointment of officers	Funds for posts in budget	HB	Q1	
1.5	Promote the P&O approach through the new Lettings Policy and Choice Based Lettings scheme and provide good information about housing opportunities	Performance monitoring and Scrutiny & Overview	Officer time	MB	Q2	
1.6	Further refine the assessment of homelessness applications to ensure that decisions are robust	Selective testing of decisions	Officer time	HB	Q1	
1.7	Develop effective Mediation Scheme.	Target of 100 sessions a month Develop in house scheme and train key staff	Spend to save funds Officer time	MB	Q2	
1.8	Develop protocols with RSLs & HFH on early warning about rent arrears and evictions	Through Homelessness Forum, Strategy Steering Group and Housing Association Forum SLA with HFH	Officer time	DG	Q2	
1.9	Target Supporting People funding to prevent homelessness and meet LAA single homelessness targets	SMT and Supporting People contracts held by Social Services eg HARTs	Officer time	DG	Q1	

Priority Two: To maximise the supply of good quality affordable housing available to the homeless

REF	OUTCOME	HOW PERFORMANCE WILL BE ASSESSED	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	LEAD	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
2.1	Procure additional private sector homes through the full range of AST schemes	Target of 675 properties	Funding in place Staff time crucial	RB	Q2	
2.2	Bring back into use private sector homes currently empty	Target of 100 properties	Funding in place Staff time crucial	RB	Q2	
2.3	Develop 969 no units of social housing	The new units being developed in partnership with RSLs will be delivered in accordance with the 2006/8 Social Housing Programme monitored by the Housing Corporation	Within existing resources	RB	Q4	
2.4	Extend Hearthstone	SMT	Need to clarify Capital requirements	DG	Q2	
2.5	Upgrade the Under-occupation incentive scheme	Proposals are due to be considered by SMT	Subject to bid for Corporate funding	AT	Q1	
2.6	Maximise the Moving out of London placements	SMT	None	AT	Q4	
2.7	Develop Move-on Strategy for Supported Housing	Multi-agency Panel SP Providers Group SP Partnership Board	Within existing resources	DG	Q1	

Priority Three: Reduce the numbers in Temporary Accommodation by 50% by 2010

REF	OUTCOME	HOW PERFORMANCE WILL BE ASSESSED	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	LEAD	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
3.1	Develop new supply of ASTs, including NHHT	TA Reduction Project Group Corporate Wellbeing sub group	Spend to save fund	RB	Q2	
3.2	Convert HALs, licences & PSLs to ASTs wherever possible	TA Reduction Project Group Corporate Wellbeing sub group	Spend to save fund	RB	Q1	
3.3	Promote the Accredited Landlord scheme	TA Reduction Project Group Corporate Wellbeing sub group	Spend to save fund	RB	Q1	
3.4	Undertake systematic resident checks and develop anti-fraud initiatives by employing TA Visiting Officers	Performance monitoring and sample testing	Officer supervision required	RB	Q1	
3.5	Develop targeted support to the vulnerable through Supporting People & Vulnerable Adults Team	TA Reduction Project Group Corporate Wellbeing sub group	Officer time	AT	Q1	

3.6	Introduce new 'finders fee' scheme for individual landlords AST scheme'	TA Reduction Project Group Corporate Wellbeing sub group	Spend to save fund	RB	Q2	
3.7	Maintain the DCLG target on use of B&B	Performance Monitoring Corporate Wellbeing sub group	Spend to Save fund DCLG grant Officer time	DG	Q1	
3.8	Target the rehousing of 16/17 year olds currently housed in B&B and make alternative accommodation available. Aim to achieve nil placements by end of 2008	TA Reduction Project Group	Officer time	DG	Q1	
3.9	Create additional 'Temporary to Permanent' schemes	TA reduction Project Group	Spend to save fund	RB	Q2	
3.10	Review all Council assets and identify properties that can provide permanent housing	TA reduction Project Group	Capital will be required as properties are evaluated HRA implications	RB	Q2	

Priority Four : Establish robust partnership arrangements to create a joined up approach

REF	OUTCOME	HOW PERFORMANCE WILL BE ASSESSED	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	LEAD	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
4.1	Prepare arrangements for the full review of homelessness strategy to be undertaken in 2008. Map out process for undertaking homelessness review	SMT Monthly review Homelessness Forum regular item Homelessness Strategy Steering Group regular item Stakeholder consultation	Officer time	DG	Q1	
4.2	Extend the Homelessness Forum arrangements	SMT monthly review Feedback from stakeholders	Officer time	DG	Q1	
4.3	Set up a Homelessness Strategy Steering Group	SMT monthly review Feedback from stakeholders	Officer time	DG	Q1	
4.4	Organise Homelessness event	SMT monthly review	Officer time DCLG offer of keynote speaker	DG	Q2	

4.5	Involve RSLs & social housing providers in a strategic and co-ordinated approach to tackling homelessness	Housing Association Forum Single Homeless Forum Integrated Housing Board	Officer time	DG	Q3	
4.6	Strengthen support to vulnerable people	(linked to 3.5) Develop a full range of protocols as set out in DCLG toolkit	Officer time	HB	Q2	
4.7	Develop opportunities to involve service users and advocates and require services to adopt an inclusive approach	SMT Monthly review Homelessness Forum regular item Homelessness Strategy Steering Group regular item Stakeholder consultation	Officer time	DG	Q2	
4.8	Ensure that needs of BME communities and vulnerable people are met through partnership working and participation. Set up new involvement arrangements	Judge success of partnership with specialist organisations and ensure wide range of people participate in forums and other consultative bodies. Work with specialist partners eg Connexions, Children's Services, Probation Service	Officer Time	DG	Q1	

4.9	Present monitoring information to inform wider policy and strategy development	SMT Homelessness Forum				
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