

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

**CABINET EXECUTIVE
6 November 2018**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor James Evans
Portfolio Holder Corporate Governance, Housing & Public
Protection

SUBJECT: Homelessness Review & Strategy

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1 Under Section 50 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, local authorities in Wales are required to review their homelessness prevention services and produce a strategy for the following four years, guided by an Action Plan.
- 1.2 This report sets out the work the Council has undertaken to review its homelessness services and the production of a Homelessness Strategy and Action Plane.
- 1.3 The report recommends approval of the draft Regional Homelessness Strategy and the Powys Homelessness Action Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1 The review of homelessness services in Powys involved discussion and liaison with colleagues within the County Council, such as Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Education, the Youth Service, as well as with partners such as housing associations, Powys Teaching Health Board, Criminal Justice agencies, and third sector support and advice services.
- 2.2 The review identified priorities for the Powys Homelessness Action Plan, which are:
 - **Continue to evolve and harness community-based services to assist in the prevention of homelessness**
 - **Explore how we can focus support to households in those localities which are producing the highest proportion of homelessness cases.**
 - **Utilise IT systems and technology to prevent homelessness by ensuring systems are in place which flag up issues early to trigger help and advice as early as possible.**

- **In partnership with key agencies explore how a multi-agency case management approach can evolve to meet the needs of households who revolve around the homeless system and place demands on a variety of services.**
- **In partnership with local stakeholders and other statutory services, explore whether a ‘Housing First’ approach can be developed to support those with the most complex needs**
- **To explore with Housing Association and private landlord partners how to develop affordable and sustainable housing options for single people.**
- **Develop close partnership working with DWP/Job Centre+ to mitigate any impact the introduction of Universal Credit may have on household’s ability to retain their tenancies.**

2.3 A series of Homelessness Workshops have been carried out between late 2017 and June 2018, where internal and external partners have attended to learn more about homelessness issues in Powys and provide their views into the homelessness review – this has allowed partners voices and ideas to be taken account of during the production of the draft review. A copy of the review is attached at Appendix 1.

2.4 Following confirmation from Welsh Government that Authorities could work on a regional basis to develop their Strategies (provided that each local authority developed its own Action Plan(s)), Powys joined with Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire to develop an over-arching regional Homelessness Strategy. A copy of the over-arching strategy is attached at Appendix 2. A copy of the Powys specific Action Plan, which seeks to address the issues highlighted in the review, is attached at Appendix 3.

3. Options Considered / Available

- 3.1 Option 1 is to approve and publish the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan. This ensures that the council complies with its statutory duties.
- 3.2 Option 2 is to not approve the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan. This option fails to satisfy the requirements of S.50 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

4. Preferred Choice and Reasons

- 4.1 It is Recommended that Cabinet support the publication of the Homelessness Strategy by 31 December 2018 to satisfy statutory requirement.

5. Impact Assessment

- 5.1 Is an impact assessment required? - Yes
- 5.2 If yes is it attached? –Yes

6. Corporate Improvement Plan

- 6.1 The Strategy and Action Plan will enable the Housing Service to support aspects of the Vision 2025, specifically the following priority areas:
- Health and Care
 - Residents and Communities

7. Local Member(s)

- 7.1 The action plan will apply across the county.

8. Other Front Line Services

- 8.1 Does the recommendation impact on other services run by the Council or on behalf of the Council? - Yes

If so, please provide their comments

- 8.2 Adult Social Care fully supports the recommendation in order to publish the strategy as legally required. Senior officers from Adult Social Care were involved in the development of the strategy and it is fully supported.
- 8.3 Children's Services support the recommendations of this report and its publishing. Children's Services are grateful to the Housing Service for their continued support, particularly with our Care Leavers and vulnerable families.

9. Communications

- 9.1 Have Communications seen a copy of this report? - Yes

Have they made a comment? - If Yes insert here.

Communications Comment: No proactive communication action required at this stage. Communication activity will focus on projects undertaken as part of the strategy.

10. Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)

- 10.1 Legal – This Report and its attachments appear compliant with Sections 50 to 52 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, and by S.52(9) we are required to publish the Strategy on our website, and for it to be available at our principal office for inspection.
- 10.2 Finance – The contents of the report are noted and agree that Cabinet support the publication of the Homelessness Strategy by 31 December 2018 to satisfy statutory requirements. There will be no additional financial implications as a result of this report all requirements will be funded within the current available budget of the service.

11. Scrutiny

- 11.1 Has this report been scrutinised? - Yes

If Yes, what version or date of report has been scrutinised?

Please insert the comments.

The Committee offered the following comments and suggestions in relation to the Draft Homelessness Strategy:

- Managing Partnership Working – the Service needs to consider the process for how partnership working will be managed;
- Housing staff working in Job Centres – concern expressed by the Committee in case this deters some people from approaching the service for assistance;
- Consideration should have been given to the need for the Tenant Support Officer covering Machynlleth to be Welsh Speaking;
- Numbers living long term in caravans and static caravans – need for better data on numbers affected;
- Revisions to housing allocations policy welcomed. There is a need to review / inclusion in the revised policy the issue of individuals living in caravans and static caravans who because they have to vacate those caravans and static caravans during the year are being housed by the Council, especially as there is anecdotal evidence that many own properties elsewhere in the country. In addition, this will mean a need to review the local connections criteria;

- The fact that the means to access information and application forms for Universal Credit is only online is of concern. The Council needs to consider how it can assist people to access this information particularly those who are vulnerable, have learning difficulties or literacy problems;
- A Member identified a project in Wrexham regarding vulnerable young people and accommodation which may be of interest to the Cabinet Member and Housing Service;
- Access to Free Advice is a duty under the 2014 Housing Act – the Committee is supportive of the Council considering more freephone access to Council services;
- Food banks – these should be included under the Housing Service’s partnership arrangements as it could be a valuable source of intelligence for the service;
- Individuals accommodated in Refuges – concern by the Committee that enough support was provided to individuals to ensure that they could access their benefits rather than them being paid to an abusive partner;
- Homelessness Statistics – need for a greater breakdown of the statistics to show at which stage individuals were receiving a service as the current statistics are unclear (e.g. numbers threatened with homelessness decreasing but numbers of cases increasing as individuals coming back into the system at various points)
- Committee supportive of work being undertaken by Service with credit unions and building societies, where individuals cannot get access to a bank account which is required for Universal Credit payments;
- Voids – the Committee supported the need for pressure on HOWPS to improve its performance to bring voids back on the market more quickly;
- With Universal Credit payments being made monthly, the Council should consider changing from a weekly to a monthly rent collection process;
- Committee supportive of the use of redundant school property for housing projects;

What changes have been made since the date of Scrutiny and explain why Scrutiny recommendations have been accepted or rejected?

Accepted. A Powys Homelessness Partnership will be established to enable the services delivered to homeless people across the county to be co-ordinated. The Partnership will meet on a quarterly basis and will include a wide range of partners from within the council, Powys Teaching Health Board, Dyfed Powys Police, housing associations and third sector agencies.

12. Data Protection

12.1 If the proposal involves the processing of personal data, then the Data Protection Officer must be consulted and their comments set out below.

13. Statutory Officers

13.1 The Head of Financial Services Deputy Section 151 Officer notes the comment from the Finance Manager.

13.2 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) commented as follows:
“I note the legal comments and have nothing to add to the report.”

14. Members' Interests

14.1 The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest, they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation
To note the Review in Appendix 1 to the report and to approve and publish the Homelessness Strategy in Appendix 2 and the Action Plan in Appendix 3	To comply with Statutory Requirement

Relevant Policy (ies):	
Within Policy:	Y
Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	All Members
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Simon Inkson
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	1st January 2018

Is a review of the impact of the decision required?	Y
If yes, date of review	30.10.18
Person responsible for the review	Rob Powell
Date review to be presented to Portfolio Holder/ Cabinet for information or further action	

Contact Officer:	Dafydd Evans
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Background Papers used to prepare Report:

Appendix 1 Powys Homelessness Review

Appendix 2 Dyfed Powys Homelessness Strategy

Appendix 3 Action Plan for Powys