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## **DRAFT HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2018-2022**

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the priorities of the draft Homelessness Housing & Strategy 2018-2022 prior to going out for wider consultation.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Council has a duty to review homelessness within the District and adopt a strategy to address homelessness every five years. The Council approved its current Homelessness Strategy in March 2016.
- 2.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into force in April 2018, has brought with it new ways of working, with an increased emphasis on homeless prevention and partnership working. As a result, the Council's current Homelessness Strategy is no longer fit for purpose.
- 2.3 In recognition of the role housing growth, new affordable housing supply and private sector housing conditions play in addressing homelessness, it was felt appropriate to develop a broader Housing & Homelessness Strategy bringing together all these elements.
- 2.4 The draft Strategy is being formatted ready for wider formal consultation in October.

### **3 SALIENT INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The draft Housing & Homelessness Strategy is attached at Appendix 1 with an Executive Summary attached at Appendix 2. The Homelessness Review report is included as Appendix 3.
- 3.2 A Review of homelessness in the District was carried out with the support of the East of England Local Government Association between May and July 2018. Although many positive changes have been achieved, including taking a much improved pro-active approach to homeless prevention and developing new temporary accommodation, a number of recommendations were made.
- 3.3 In addition, a review was carried out of the national housing policy context and its impact on the district, local planning policies and strategies, housing needs, opportunities for new housing supply and growth. These were developed to provide context for the main strategy.
- 3.4 Housing in the private sector, which may be owned or rented, also plays a key role in maintaining good health and wellbeing, enabling older and disabled people to live independently and in preventing homelessness. Therefore, the draft Strategy also includes elements relating to private sector housing.

3.5 The Strategy work has identified four key areas to focus on with associated priorities: These are:-

1. Place

- To support the delivery of appropriate housing growth in Rochford District.
- To use all available resources to deliver affordable housing to meet needs.

2. People

- To meet housing needs and reduce homelessness in partnership.
- To meet the needs of our ageing population and other vulnerable groups.

3. Property

- To raise standards of housing management and property conditions in the private sector, especially those that have an impact on health.
- To maximise the use of existing private housing stock.
- To prevent homelessness from the private rented sector.

4. Partnerships

- To work in partnership to achieve our housing objectives, and channel internal and external resources to deliver this strategy.

3.6 The new draft Strategy provides a robust basis on which to address the housing needs of residents of the district and prevent homelessness, in line with the requirements of the new legislation, working in partnership across sectors to deliver.

### **Consultation**

3.7 Consultation to date has been with both internal and external officers and partners, through 1:1 conversations, workshop sessions and a multi-agency Homelessness Forum. Views of those consulted have informed the priorities, subsequent recommendations and action plan.

3.8 Formal consultation for a period of 28 days is due to take place in October. This formal consultation will be publicised online and will include the general public, housing associations, neighbouring authorities, private landlords / letting agencies and other statutory and voluntary sector partners.

3.9 Comments received during the consultation will then be considered and incorporated into a final version of the Strategy along with any new Government policy announcements.

**4 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There is an inherent risk when developing a new strategy that the Government will announce new policies that will have an impact. The Housing Green Paper has since been published for consultation; however, the risk is low as the draft Strategy's housing priorities are designed to be broad enough to encompass any final changes that emerge.
- 4.2 There is a low risk that partners might not join up to work with the Council to deliver the draft Strategy priorities. However, initial consultation and engagement has indicated that all partners support the approach taken and are willing to sign up to a Homelessness Charter, the mechanism by which the Council seeks to deploy, to meet the homeless prevention priority.
- 4.3 There is a risk that the anticipated new affordable housing will not be delivered in line with the supply pipeline expectations; however, the draft Strategy encourages the Council to consider the use of its own resources to help deliver new affordable housing, showing leadership and helping to implement the Strategy through direct action to ensure that this risk is minimised and that new affordable housing is delivered.

**5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct resource implications relating to the draft Strategy. Existing staff resources will take the Strategy forward and monitor progress against the Action Plan on a regular basis, reporting to Members as necessary.

**6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to review homelessness in the district and publish a strategy based on the findings of that review.
- 6.2 While there is no current legal requirement to publish a Housing Strategy, the Council has taken the opportunity to include homelessness within a broader Housing and Homelessness Strategy, which addresses private sector housing, housing growth and new housing supply, recognising the impact all these elements have on preventing homelessness.

**7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
  - To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

- To foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnerships, pregnancy/maternity.
- 7.3 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic and in some cases has a positive impact.
- 7.4 The Equality Impact Assessment can be found on the Council website.

## **8 RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

To endorse the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 prior to wider consultation.



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### **Background Papers:-**

None.

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