



Report to Cabinet

Subject: South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy

Date: 6 April 2017

Author: Joint report of the Service Managers for Economic Growth and Regeneration and Revenues and Welfare Support

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

The Council is legally required to publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years. This report sets out to update Members on the development of the South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021 and provides an opportunity for input following wider consultation and prior to final drafting.

It is proposed that a presentation is made to Cabinet in the Autumn with the final draft.

Key Decision

Yes

Background

- 1.1 The three Boroughs of Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe have strategic responsibility for meeting our legislative requirements under the Homelessness Act 2002.
- 1.2 Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires Local Authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy within a period of 5 years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published.
- 1.3 This is the second joint homelessness strategy for the three Boroughs. The last joint homelessness strategy was published in 2013. The three Councils have utilised the joint homelessness strategy and action plan to promote and focus effective partnership working across the three areas including multi agency working through the South

Nottinghamshire Inter Agency Homelessness Forum, the body which monitors progress on the action plan.

The Homelessness Strategy sets out a pro-active approach to preventing homelessness, working in partnership with neighbouring Councils and other key partners including those with a skills, education and training remit to ensure a holistic approach. This is at a time of increasing pressure on homelessness services brought about by a number of factors including welfare reform, a reduction in the number and range of support services provided by partner agencies and pressures on the continued supply of social rented affordable housing. It is also at a time of significant change in the way that homelessness services will be delivered, as shown in the Homelessness Reduction Bill.

- 1.4 The Strategy builds on the achievements of the previous Homelessness Strategy and sets out a framework for continued improvements.

Key achievements include:

- Delivering over 150 affordable homes through successful partnerships since 2013 in the Borough
- Successfully bidding for funding to commission research into the accommodation and support needs of 19-35 year olds to identify current gaps, further challenges through welfare reform and identify opportunities to minimise negative impacts
- As part of a Nottinghamshire-wide consortium, successfully bidding for £370,000 of funding over 2 years to provide a county-wide rough sleeper service and extend street outreach services across Nottinghamshire
- Achieving over 1,000 homelessness preventions since 2013 in the Borough
- Successful provision and support of accommodation for Syrian Refugees in the Borough as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Programme and Vulnerable Children's Relocation Programme
- Successfully delivering Private Landlords partnership events, attended by over 60 landlords and letting agents
- Working with Broxtowe Youth Homelessness to deliver educational sessions to year 10 and 11 students in South Nottinghamshire to

raise awareness, challenge stereotypes and equip young people with the knowledge to make informed housing choices and access support

- Contributing to the development of the County-wide Housing & Health Commissioning Group and the development of the Health and Wellbeing Plan, including identification of best practice pilot schemes

2.1 **Proposal**

The strategy adopts a structured approach and broadly follows the themes identified in the previous strategy which reflect the three primary objectives identified in the Homelessness Act 2002:

- Prevention of homelessness by enabling people to access adequate and appropriate housing advice
- Help at the point of homelessness to prevent rough sleeping
- Enabling the move away from homelessness, including support to live in new move-on accommodation.

The strategy expands on the primary objectives in the areas where we need to do more to prevent and tackle homelessness.

An action plan has been developed around the five priority areas identified below and will be monitored and updated through the South Nottinghamshire Inter Agency Homelessness Forum to reflect emerging priorities, challenges and opportunities, including further welfare reform measures, and the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Bill.

2.1.1 **Minimising demand** – to work with partners to reduce the demand for homelessness services through delivering interventions to ensure that households know where to access advice and support at the appropriate time that assists them to avoid or deal with issues that could lead to homelessness. This will include further engagement with young people on the realities of housing choice.

2.1.2 **Reducing the extent of crisis presentations** – working in a more joined up way to identify those households at high risk of homelessness by making sure agencies can recognise the indicators of housing stress and be able to act appropriately to prevent homelessness.

2.1.3 **Delivering effective services at the point of contact** – ensuring that households who approach services across South Nottinghamshire will be

able to access effective advice and assistance to prevent homelessness, either by enabling them to remain where they are or by facilitating a move into more appropriate accommodation. These services will also provide access to other services promoting education, training and employment opportunities, health services, life-skills and benefits advice. These will strengthen people's chances of resolving their housing problems.

- 2.1.4 **Providing appropriate accommodation options** – ensuring that partners are able to facilitate access to appropriate accommodation to prevent and resolve homelessness in the short, medium and long term, including the Private Rented Sector and that there are appropriate pathways into housing with support and move on accommodation where appropriate.
- 2.1.5 **Moving people away from homelessness** - reducing incidences of repeat homelessness through enabling a range of options that will assist people in accessing education, training, employment or other appropriate support. This will assist people to move away from homelessness.
- 2.2 The Strategy has been developed through the South Nottinghamshire Inter Agency Homelessness Forum, which includes representatives from all three Boroughs; County Council and a number of partner organisations with a homelessness remit. The strategy has undergone extensive consultation over a 12 week period (11 November 2016 – 6 February 2017) and provided opportunities for partners to contribute to the development of the strategy. Consultees included neighbouring Councils; County Council; Social Landlords; Nottinghamshire Public Health and third sector organisations dealing with homeless clients. Responses were received from a wide range of partner organisations including Nottinghamshire County Council; the Probation Service; Homelessness Charities; other Councils; local colleges; the NHS and private landlord representatives. A summary of responses is available as appendix 2.
- 2.3 Overall, the responses confirmed that the priorities contained within the draft strategy were appropriate. Significantly, responses very much confirmed the need to ensure appropriate homelessness prevention services are in place and that opportunities to bolster access to wider support through partners, including relating to training opportunities and health, are maximised.
- 2.4 The strategy also takes account of data trends across the South Nottinghamshire area relating to homelessness.
- 2.5 The Strategy strongly focuses efforts on preventing homelessness. This is reflective of the emerging Government priorities and statutory obligations for local authorities contained in the Homelessness Reduction Bill which is currently being considered in the House of Lords. The Bill

seeks to refocus English local authorities on efforts to prevent homelessness. As such, the Government propose that additional resources will be made available to housing authorities to comply with the new statutory requirements.

2.6

The progress of the Bill will be monitored in order to ensure that the homelessness strategy and delivery plan fully reflects new requirements and maximises opportunities to bolster efforts to prevent homelessness.

2.7

Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) – An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken prior to the final strategy being published.

Alternative Options

3.1 It is a legal requirement to publish a new homelessness strategy at least every 5 years, therefore, in order to comply with legal requirements, the strategy must be published by the end of the 2017 calendar year.

3.2 Gedling Borough Council could produce a stand-alone Homelessness Strategy. However, we work closely with Broxtowe and Rushcliffe Borough Councils in many aspects of housing and are able to pool resources; many statutory and voluntary sector agencies work across the area so they only need a single channel of engagement rather than three separate relationships and Nottinghamshire County Council treats the three boroughs as a single area for the purposes of commissioning housing related support services. The strategy could be produced on an individual authority basis, however, this would reduce the opportunities for joint working across the three authorities and also have capacity implications

Financial Implications

4.1 Delivery of the annual Action Plan will be contained within existing approved budgets. Any additional plans/projects will be delivered subject to securing budget approval and will identify external funding streams as appropriate.

Appendices

5.1 South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan

5.2 South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy consultation responses

Background Papers

6.1 South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy 2013-2017

Recommendation(s)

To note progress on the South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy and comment as appropriate. Comments will be used to inform the final homelessness strategy document.

That the strategy is presented again to Cabinet later in the year in its final format so seek approval to publish once the implications of the Homelessness Reduction Bill are fully known

Reasons for Recommendations

The South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy seeks to:

Raise awareness among Members, officers, partners and the public about the homelessness challenges facing the Borough and wider South Nottinghamshire area and the Council's actions in response.

Focus resources on priorities that make a practical difference with a strong focus on preventing homelessness.

Production of a Homelessness Strategy at least every 5 years is a statutory requirement.

To accord with the Council's Corporate Plan.