

Report to Cabinet

Subject: South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21

Date: 7 December 2017

Author: Report of the Chief Executive

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

To seek approval for the South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021 at Appendix one.

Key Decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.

Background

- 1.1 The draft South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy was presented to Cabinet for consideration and feedback in April with the recommendation that the final strategy was presented to Cabinet once the Homelessness Reduction Bill was enacted. The previous paper to Cabinet is attached as Appendix two.
- 1.2 The Council has strategic responsibility for meeting our legislative requirements under the Homelessness Act 2002. The Homelessness Act 2012 requires Local Authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy within a period of 5 years.
- 1.3 This is the second joint homelessness strategy for South Nottinghamshire. The last joint homelessness strategy was published in 2013 and is due to expire at the end of this year.

Proposal

- 2.1 The Homelessness Reduction Bill was enacted on 27th April. Since

that time, the South Nottinghamshire Councils have benefitted from a greater understanding of the implications of the Act and a consultation draft Homelessness Code of Guidance is currently out for consultation.

2.2 Whilst this has resulted in a need to amend the action plan to fully take account of the implications of the Act, the understanding of implications at the time the draft report was presented to Cabinet has remained correct and has meant that the body of the strategy remains unchanged.

2.3 As outlined in the previous report to Cabinet, the focus of the Strategy remains on the following priorities:

- **Minimising demand** 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.
- **Reducing the extent of crisis presentations** by working in a more joined up way to identify those households at high risk of homelessness
- **Delivering effective services at the point of contact** by ensuring that households who approach services across South Nottinghamshire will be able to access effective advice and assistance to prevent homelessness
- **Providing appropriate accommodation options** by ensuring that partners are able to facilitate access to appropriate accommodation to prevent and resolve homelessness in the short, medium and long term
- **Moving people away from homelessness** by reducing incidences of repeat homelessness through enabling a range of options that will assist people in accessing education, training, employment or other appropriate support.

2.4 The Strategy was developed through the South Nottinghamshire Inter Agency Homelessness Forum, which includes representatives from all three Boroughs; the 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. As reported to Cabinet in April 2017, 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.

- 2.5 A summary of the consultation responses together with the Council's response for consideration by Cabinet is available as appendix three. Cabinet will note that a number of minor changes have been made to the original draft Strategy in light of the consultation responses.

The overall focus of the strategy remains on preventing homelessness. This is reflective of Government priorities and statutory obligations for local authorities contained in the Homelessness Reduction Act.

As stated, the body of the Strategy remains as per the draft presented to Cabinet in April. However, actions covering the following have been included in the Action Plan to better reflect the greater understanding of the implications of the Homelessness Reduction Act:

- Examining ways that support needs can be addressed within personalised action plans
- Ensuring that staff are fully prepared for the new requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act
- Ensuring that partner agencies are fully briefed and prepared for the new requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act
- Working with our software provider to ensure our requirements are communicated and work scheduled in within appropriate timescales including the need for staff training
- Joint work across the South of the County to provide consistent advice and information.

- 2.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the Strategy which suggests a positive impact of Strategy across all groups experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix four.

Alternative Options

- 3.1 It is a legal requirement to update the homelessness strategy at least every 5 years, therefore the strategy must be updated by end of the 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.

Financial Implications

- 4.1 Actions planned will be contained within existing budgets. Any additional costs are subject to appropriate internal and external funding streams being identified

Appendices

- 5.1 South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan
- 5.2 Draft South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy - report to Cabinet 6 April 2017
- 5.3 Summary of responses received to the Homelessness Strategy consultation
- 5.4 Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers

- 6.1 South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy 2013-2017

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

Approve the South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021 at Appendix one.

Reasons for Recommendations

To ensure that the Council has a Homelessness Strategy in place which focusses resources on priorities that make a practical difference with a strong focus on preventing homelessness and meets statutory requirements.