

Subject:	Homelessness Strategy Review 2017 – 2018	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	13 th September 2017
Report of:	Housing Manager	Portfolio Holder:	Health & Housing
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required: No	Attached:	No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required: No	Attached:	No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	Cabinet is asked to note the content of the strategy review and ratify the document in advance of publication.
1.2	All future minor amendments to the strategy to be delegated to the Housing Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To inform Cabinet of our legal responsibilities under the Homelessness Act 2002 and demonstrate compliance with this legislation through publication of the review document which outlines our strategic approach to preventing and relieving homelessness in the Borough.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:

- **A connected and successful Rossendale that welcomes sustainable growth:** our priority is to ensure that we are well connected to our residents, key partners and stakeholders. We want to make the most of every pound we spend and we are always looking for new and innovative ways to make the resources we do have, work harder for us.
- **A proud, healthy and vibrant Rossendale:** our priority is to ensure that we are creating and maintaining a healthy and vibrant place for people to live and visit.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Under the *Homelessness Act 2002* all housing authority districts must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district; this must be renewed at least every 5 years. Unless there is an up-to-date strategy in place there is a risk we may not continue to receive resource from the Department of Communities and Local Government to prevent homelessness, and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

5.1 The current Rossendale Homelessness Strategy covers the period 2007 – 2012

5.2 Statutory guidance states that “a *Homelessness Strategy must set out plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.*”

Housing authorities will therefore need to ensure that all organisations, within all sectors, whose work can help to prevent homelessness and/or meet the needs of homeless people in their district are involved in the strategy. This will need to include not just housing providers ...but also other statutory bodies such as social services, the probation service, the health service and the wide range of organisations in the private and voluntary sectors whose work helps prevent homelessness or meet the needs of people who have experienced homelessness.”

The Housing Manager has undertaken a review of the main causes of homelessness in the Borough and identified appropriate services designed to support specific client groups.

Key causes of homelessness in Rossendale include:

- End of a private sector tenancy
- Rent arrears
- Parents/friends/relatives unwilling to accommodate
- Relationship breakdown with domestic violence

5.3 A decision was made to undertake a strategy review and update, rather than issue a further 5 year strategy document as the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act during 2018 will bring new duties and change the way in which services are delivered.

The Act places a new duty on local authorities to help prevent the homelessness of all families and single people, regardless of priority need, who are eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness.

Key measures in the Act include:

- An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days, and clarification of the action an authority should take when someone applies for assistance having been served with a section 8 (1) or section 21 (2) notice. These provisions represent a shift in focus to early intervention, and aim to encourage local housing authorities to act quickly and proactively, addressing some concerns that some previously only intervened at crisis point.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for *all* eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need. This extends the help available to people not in priority need, with local housing authorities supporting them to either stay in their accommodation or help them find somewhere to live and should mean fewer households reach a crisis situation.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of priority need. This help could be, for example, the provision of a rent deposit or debt advice. Those who have a priority need will be provided with interim accommodation whilst the Local Housing Authority carries out the reasonable steps.
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It is hoped that this measure will ensure that their housing situation is considered when an individual comes into contact with wider public services.

5.4 At Autumn Statement 2015 the Government announced that the DWP Temporary Accommodation Management Fee would end, to be replaced by a new funding arrangement

to give more control and flexibility to tackle homelessness.

The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant has been allocated according to a formula which reflects relative homeless pressures and the allocation for Rossendale

The grant is ring-fenced for an initial period of two years and during that time may be used only to prevent or deal with homelessness.

The allocations for Rossendale are:

2017/18 £41,815.39
2018/19 £46,551.68

In addition to the above Flexible Homelessness Support Grant, councils will receive an allocation from £61 million additional funding across 2017/18 and 2018/19 to meet the costs of the new Homelessness Reduction Act.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.1 Financial matters are noted within the report.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 All legal matters are covered within the body of the report.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

8.1 Consultation on the strategy review document was undertaken with internal colleagues and external stakeholders including:

- East Lancashire housing authorities
- Children's Services
- Shelter
- Citizens Advice
- Supported accommodation providers
- Adult Social care
- Together Housing
- Calico

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Cabinet are asked to ratify the strategy review document and Officers will provide updates and briefings as statutory guidance is issued to support the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Homelessness Strategy Review 2017 - 2018	Council website