

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

THE COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 22 APRIL 2008

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND HEALTH

7. HOMELESS AND HOMELESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2008-2013

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

RECOMMENDATION - that (A) Members recommend that the Executive adopt the East Herts Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy 2008-13 and the accompanying action plan; and

(B) Members agree to an annual report to Community Scrutiny to monitor progress of the action plan

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1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 To present to Members, for consideration and comment and recommend for adoption, the Council's new Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy and accompanying action plan for the period 2008-2013

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/Objectives

2.1 **Promoting prosperity and well-being; providing access and opportunities**

*Enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.*

**Fit for purpose, services fit for you**

*Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.*

**Leading the way, working together**

*Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public.*

### 3.0 Background

3.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all local authorities are required to carry out a homeless review and to develop and publish a strategy based on the review every five years. East Herts published its first Homeless Strategy in July 2003 and is therefore due to publish the next review and strategy before the end of July 2008.

### 4.0 Report

4.1 The Homeless Act 2002 places stronger duties on local authorities to assist homeless and potentially homeless people. One of the key aims of the Act is to ensure that housing authorities take a comprehensive and strategic approach to managing and preventing all forms of homelessness in their district.

4.2 The Council's first Homeless Strategy (Appendix 'A', pages 7.5 - 7.32) was published in July 2003 and a lot has changed both locally and nationally since as far as homelessness is concerned. One of the most significant changes has been the bringing back in-house of the Council's housing advice, homelessness and housing register services in April 2005 after ten years of being contracted out to South Anglia and Riversmead Housing Associations. The services have been brought together and provided by a new Housing Options Service based at both our Bishop's Stortford and Hertford offices with the focus on the prevention of homelessness.

4.3 The Council and its partners have made significant progress on providing and improving services to those people that are homeless or potentially homeless. The new Strategy builds on the themes of the original strategy but has a greater emphasis on the pro-active prevention of homelessness wherever possible.

4.3 Through the Council's East Herts Homeless Strategy Group, which is led and co-ordinated by the Council and includes partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors who have an interest in homelessness, there has been discussion and consultation that has resulted in the development of the Homeless Strategy 2008-2013.

4.4 The aims and objectives of the Strategy will be delivered, with our partner agencies, through the Action Plan which has been grouped by six Strategic Objectives. These Strategic Objectives are:

- Prevent Homelessness through early intervention and targeted Housing Advice

- Develop and Improve Services to Young people
- Improve the type and use of temporary accommodation for homeless households
- Improve services to homeless households and households in housing need
- Develop and improve partnership working to maximise benefits to homeless households
- Increase the supply of appropriate, good quality affordable housing

4.5 The Strategy (Appendix 'A', pages 7.5 - 7.32) is for a five year period but will be reviewed annually. The annual review will be an opportunity to measure progress being made on the actions and new targets or actions can be identified and included.

4.6 In addition progress against the actions will be monitored quarterly by the East Herts Homeless Strategy Group and our partner agencies that are represented on that group.

#### 5.0 Consultation

5.1 The Council's East Herts Homeless Strategy Group has been consulted on this strategy and supports it. This group is led and co-ordinated by the Council and includes partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors who have an interest in homelessness. This includes the CAB, Hertfordshire Probation Service, YMCA, Riversmead and South Anglia Housing Associations, Vale House, and Shelter. There are also 'sleeping' members of the group who were included in the process such as the Hertfordshire Primary Care Trust and Women's Aid.

5.2 A draft copy of the strategy (Appendix 'A', pages \*) has also been sent to a wide range of voluntary, statutory and charity organisations that are likely to have an interest in the content of document. A draft copy has also been posted onto the Council's website for consultation.

#### 6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a legal duty onto the Council to produce a homeless review and Homeless Strategy every five years.

#### 7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 None

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 None.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 There is a risk of a legal challenge if the Council does not publish a Homeless Strategy by the end of July 2008.

Background Papers

Appendix 'A' - Homeless Strategy (Pages 7.5 - 7.32)

Appendix 'B' - Action Plan (Pages 7.33 - 7.43)

Appendix 'C' - Strategic Links (Pages 7.44 - 7.45)

Appendix 'D' - Performance Monitoring (Page 7.46)

Appendix 'E' - Glossary of Terms (Pages 7.47 - 7.50)

Appendix 'F' - Structure Chart for Health and Housing Services  
(Page 7.51)

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