

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

THE COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21 JULY 2009

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND HEALTH

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE HOMELESS AND HOMELESS PREVENTION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2008-2013

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

'D' RECOMMENDATION - that the progress on the Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy Action Plan 2008-13 be noted.

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1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 The report highlights successful performance on the first year of the Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy Action Plan 2008-2013. The report also presents to Members, for consideration and comment, a review of the Action Plan.

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 second Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy in July 2008.

At the Community Scrutiny meeting of 22 July 2008 Members agreed to an annual report to be presented to Community Scrutiny to monitor progress of the action plan.

#### 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 second Homeless and Homeless prevention Strategy and Action Plan was published in July 2008. Since then the Council and its partners, mainly through the Council's multi-agency East Herts Homeless Strategy Group have worked to progress and monitor the actions on the plan.

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 in East Herts. Appendix 'A' (Pages 9.5 - 9.15) details progress on each action in the Homeless and Homeless Prevention Action Plan. The report hi-lights three significant actions that have been successfully achieved from the action plan.

4.4 **Action 13: Continue to improve the quality and appropriateness of the temporary accommodation available.** Both Hillcrest and Thele House hostels were returned to the Council's direct management in November 2008 after being managed under contract by Paradigm Housing Association since 2005. The Housing Options Team employs a dedicated part-time Hostel Officer who manages the day to day service at the hostel. There have been significant benefits to bringing the management of the hostels back in-house. However, the most significant has been the average length of stay. The average length of stay for hostel residents, who are owed a duty and have children, from November 2008 to March 2009, under the direct management of the Housing Options Service, was 15 weeks compared to 22 weeks for the previous 6 months.

4.5 Since November 2008 the Housing Options Team have managed to successfully rehouse all the residents of Hillcrest Hostel to enable it to be refurbished which left Thele House as the Council's only homeless hostel from February 2009. Hillcrest Hostel has now been refurbished into 11 units of flexible self-contained

accommodation and was brought back into use as a homeless hostel at the beginning of July. Thele House is now empty and the Council are currently reviewing the best future use of the property.

- 4.6 **Action 11: Halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010.** The Council has been set a target by central government to reduce the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation by half compared the number housed on 31 December 2004. The Councils target is therefore 33 homeless households in temporary accommodation by March 2010. The Housing Options Team, against a background of increased homelessness, met this target one year early on 31 March 2009 and have continue manage the target of below 33 households.
- 4.7 **Action 9: To work with Herts Young Homeless Group, Aldwyck Housing Association and the County Council to increase the homeless prevention initiatives available for young people including awareness raising events at schools.** The Council have provided funds in 2008/09 and 2009/10, along with four other Local Authorities in Hertfordshire and the County Council, to support Herts Young Homeless Group going into our local schools and providing awareness training on the realities of homelessness aimed at 14 year olds. The programme has been very well received by all the schools that have participated to date. There are a number of other initiatives aimed at reducing homelessness in young people that are both district and county wide. In 2008/09 the Council had ten 16 and 17 years present as homeless compared to 12 for 2007/08.
- 4.8 The Housing Service is considering one additional action to the original agreed action plan which is as a result of the government providing every local authority in the Country with a Repossession and Eviction Prevention Grant. East Herts Council was awarded a one off grant £47,500. This action has been added to the end of the action plan.
- 5.0 Consultation
- 5.1 Through the Council's East Herts Homeless Strategy Group, that 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 PCT.

5.2 The Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy is available on the Council's website.

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 that are aware of.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 None

Background Papers

None

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