

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY – 24 SEPTEMBER 2013

EXECUTIVE – 1 OCTOBER 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH, HOUSING AND
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

THE EAST HERTS HOMELESS STRATEGY 2013-2018

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To present to Community Scrutiny and the Executive, for consideration and comment and recommend for consultation, the Council's new Homeless Review and Strategy 2013-18.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY SCRUTINY: That:</u>	
(A)	the draft Homeless Strategy be considered and recommendations made to the Executive so that officers can consult on the document with external partners and stakeholders; and
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE</u>	
(B)	the East Herts Homeless Strategy 2013-2018 be approved for the purposes of consultation.

1.0 Background

1.1 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, it's second in 2008 and is therefore due to publish the next review and strategy before the end of 2013.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The Council's last Homeless Strategy was adopted and published in July 2008 and the Council and its partners have made significant progress on providing and improving services to those people that are homeless or potentially homeless. The Strategy includes a section on the achievements, by the Council and its partners to improve the Homeless Services provided, since the last Strategy was adopted.
- 2.3 A lot has changed both locally and nationally since the last Homeless Strategy was adopted. The most significant recent changes that have an impact on homelessness have been as a result of the Localism Act 2012 and the significant Welfare Reform changes primarily affecting benefit eligibility. The Strategy provides more detail on the actual changes resulting from these two pieces of legislation which are likely to have a direct and indirect effect on homelessness.
- 2.4 A draft Strategy has been developed which is at **Essential Reference Paper "B"**. The Strategy has four Strategic Themes around which the Action Plan will be developed. The Action Plan will shape the emphasis of the Housing Options Team's work for the next five years. These are:
1. Prevent Homelessness through early intervention and targeted Housing Advice including mitigating the impact of welfare reform so that the risk of homelessness is reduced;
 2. Increase the role of the private rented sector for those in housing need, with better sustained tenancies;
 3. Increase the supply of appropriate, good quality affordable housing including the provision of supported accommodation;

4. Continue to develop and strengthen partnership working to maximise the benefits to homeless households.
- 2.5 This draft Strategy will be updated following recommendations from this Committee and discussed at the Executive on 1 October 2013. The attached draft Strategy will be further updated with the recommendations from Executive and will then be published for consultation for four weeks. The document will be sent to our close partners, for example Registered Providers and CAB and will be published on our website.
- 2.6 Following the consultation the Strategy will be amended to take into account the responses from our partners and a revised Homeless Strategy 2013-2018 will be drafted. At this time an Action Plan will also be developed and included with the Homeless Strategy.
- 2.7 A report is then due to be brought back to Executive on 11 December for recommendation that the Homeless Strategy 2013-18 be adopted by the Council.
- 3.0 Implications/Consultations
- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None

Contact Member: Councillor Linda Haysey, Executive Member for Health Housing and Community Support
Linda.haysey@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Simon Drinkwater, Director of Neighbourhood Services - Ext No 1405
Simon.drinkwater@eastherts.gov.uk

Claire Bennett, Manager Housing Services – Ext No 1603
Claire.bennett@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author: Claire Bennett, Manager Housing Services – Ext No 1603
Claire.bennett@eastherts.gov.uk