

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

19 NOVEMBER 2019

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2018-2022

1.0 Purpose of report

1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to adopt and submit to Welsh Government the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018 – 2022, which has taken into consideration consultation responses.

2.0 Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan/other corporate priorities

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priorities:-

- **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human, and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3.0 Background

3.1 Part 2 of The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on the Council to carry out a Homelessness Review for its area and then formulate and adopt a Homelessness Strategy, based on the results of that review. Any review and strategy must look at the achievement of the following objectives:

- The prevention of homelessness;
- That suitable accommodation is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless;
- That satisfactory support is available for people who are or may become homeless.

3.2 Section 60 of The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 states that the Council must ensure that information and advice about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness is available free of charge to any person in its area. The publication of how the system of information and advice operates along with its impact on people who are homeless or may become homeless is also required.

3.3 It also requires the Council to work alongside other public authorities and the voluntary sector to ensure that the service is designed to meet the needs of

groups at particular risk of homelessness. Such groups include people leaving prison or youth detention accommodation, young people leaving care, people leaving the regular armed forces, people leaving hospital after inpatient medical treatment for mental health challenges and people receiving mental health services in the community.

- 3.4 The Homelessness Strategy has links to the Council's Well Being Plan. The plan makes reference to issues that can be the cause or result of homelessness e.g. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's), mental health and also makes reference to the alignment of the Welsh Government Tackling Poverty Grants – focusing on alleviating child poverty through early intervention programmes, such as Flying Start, Families First, Supporting People and Communities First Legacy Funding.
- 3.5 The Strategy further highlights the intention of working with partners, including service users and carers, to take early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services, supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop local solutions to meet local needs and enjoy independent life as much as they can.
- 3.6 The Strategy also supports the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This Act is about improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales through sustainable development. The number of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless is a National Performance Indicator for this Act. The Homelessness Strategy demonstrates the 'sustainable development principle' by:
- Addressing long term challenges
 - Focusing on prevention
 - Delivering an integrated approach
 - Working in collaboration with others
 - Involving people who use services in the planning, design and commissioning of services
- 3.7 The Strategy also supports the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 which places a greater emphasis on ensuring services are more person centred, promoting independence and reducing reliance on more intensive services. In accordance with Section 8 of the Act Welsh Ministers have issued a statement relating to the well-being of people who need care and support and carers who need support. One of the national well-being outcomes specifically links to the suitability of living accommodation. The outcomes states:
- 'I live in a home that best supports me to achieve my wellbeing'*
- 3.8 Section 37 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 contains the duty to provide care and support for a child in the local authority area if s/he has an eligible need for care and support. These include the powers to accommodate and support the child's carers and other family members as well.

- 3.9 The above demonstrates that alleviating homelessness is not the sole responsibility of one department in the Council, but that it is a responsibility of the Council as a whole.
- 3.10 The draft Homelessness Strategy was presented to Cabinet on 22nd January 2019, where Cabinet approved a period of public consultation. The draft Strategy was also presented to Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 on 18th March 2019, comments from which have been included in the final Strategy.

4.0 Current Situation/proposal

- 4.1 The Strategy was developed further to a review of homelessness services in the area, undertaken between July – October 2018. The approach taken has been one of co-production. An independent consultant was commissioned to undertake the Homelessness Review which offered an independence from the Council and a fresh perspective to inform the Strategy. All key stakeholder groups were surveyed/interviewed, including people that use/have used homelessness services. Key performance statistics were also analysed along with a review of relevant local and national policies.

Consultation and co-production

- 4.2 Co-production was a key principle of developing the Strategy and as well as the formal questionnaires available to the public a focus was placed on learning the views of service users in addition to the professionals involved in providing services and support for homeless people. As a result of this focus, questionnaires were designed in line with the principles of the Equal Ground Standard (looking at person-centred principles in frontline homelessness services). A total of 76 questionnaires from service users were completed which provided key information which ultimately informed the objectives and actions adopted by the Strategy. 29 of these questionnaires were returned by people that live in supported housing. Service user interaction provided an opportunity for discussion with individuals and for them to voice their key priorities for action and highlight their experiences. This included reasons for homeless presentations, outcomes achieved and desired, and background demographics. Other activities to gather information included:

- A half day workshop was held with Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Supporting People and Housing Solutions Teams to explore their views on local provision and their performance in line with the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;
- A half day workshop was held with BCBC Statutory Services; Registered Social Landlords and Providers;
- Consultation with Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board.

- 4.3 Professional consultees include -

Statutory

- BCBC – Housing Solutions
- BCBC – Supporting People Team
- BCBC – Social Services

- BCBC – Environmental Health
- BCBC – Local Member with Wellbeing Portfolio
- South Wales Police
- Swansea Bay University and Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Boards

Providers

- The Wallich
- Pobl Care & Support
- Llamau
- Calan DVS
- Shelter Cymru

Registered Social Landlords

- Hafod Housing
- Linc Cymru
- United Welsh
- Valleys to Coast
- Wales & West

4.4 A public consultation outlining the Strategy was undertaken over a six week period following the presentation of the Strategy to Cabinet on 22 January 2019. Links to complete the consultation were sent to the Registered Social Landlords that form part of the Common Housing Register (Hafod, Linc Cymru, Wales & West and Valleys to Coast), the Housing Solutions and Rehousing Teams, the Chair of Cwm Taf Health Board and all members of the Supporting People and Homelessness Forum. The draft Strategy was available alongside the consultation document. The consultation received 45 (online) responses. The public consultation summary is attached at **Appendix A**. In summary:

- 45 respondents completed the questionnaire
- 75% of respondents said that the Strategy clearly explains why Homelessness is a priority for the Council
- 78% of respondents agree with the objectives outlined in the Strategy
- 76% of respondents noted nothing was missing and there was no additional information they would like to see included.

4.5 The Strategy has been revised to take into consideration consultation responses and is attached at **Appendix B**. The aim of the Strategy is to work collaboratively on a corporate basis with external partners, and service users, in a responsive, creative and timely manner to prevent and relieve homelessness throughout the county borough, ensuring people can access suitable accommodation, with the support required to meet their needs. The key objectives are -

- Objective 1 - Improve collaboration between external organisations
- Objective 2 - Improve collaboration between the statutory functions within the Local Authority.

- Objective 3 - Improve working arrangements between the Local Authority and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to facilitate co-operation in line with Section 95 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- Objective 4 - Improve how people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness access services.
- Objective 5 - Improve the accessibility and availability of support and accommodation options for all service users.
- Objective 6 – Support Rough Sleepers and tackle the need to sleep Rough

4.6 To support the Strategy an action plan has been developed to achieve the objectives (**Appendix C**). The actions have been developed further to respond to:

- The findings of the homelessness review
- Consultation with providers, statutory services and service users
- Consultation with the public

5.0 Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

6.0 Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening form was completed in December 2018 which identified that a full EIA was not required.

7.0 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Implications

7.1 The report contributes to the following goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsive Wales

7.2 The 5 ways of working have been considered in the preparation of this report and are summarised below –

- Long term – continued provision will allow for short terms needs to be met, whilst BCBC works together with internal and external partners for the effective planning of long term provision
- Prevention – current activities, strategy objectives and proposed actions are preventative and responsive in nature and are designed to reduce the burden on more costly interventions
- Integration – the Strategy and Action Plan supports economic, social and cultural outcomes, both at an individual level and in wider communities

- Collaboration – the Strategy and Action Plan are predicated on effective and successful collaboration and partnership arrangements with internal and external colleagues, other statutory bodies, 3rd sector and service user engagement

7.3 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The recommendations in this report will not incur any additional financial implications and will be managed within existing resources and will be delivered through existing Homelessness and Supporting People budgets.

9.0 Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet adopt the Homelessness Strategy attached as Appendix B for submission to Welsh Government.

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Chief Executive

15/10/2019

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Background Documents:

Minutes - Cabinet, 22nd January 2019

Minutes - Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3, 18th March 2019