

Meeting of:	SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3
Date of Meeting:	25 SEPTEMBER 2023
Report Title:	HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAMME STRATEGY (HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY) 2022 - 2026
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	MARTIN MORGANS HEAD OF PARTNERSHIP SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a requirement under Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 to carry out a Homelessness Review and then to develop a Homelessness Strategy. - The format of what is now referred to as a Housing Support Programme Strategy is set by Welsh Government. - BCBC has undertaken a review, the findings of which include increasing demands on housing services across the board and a lack of availability of suitable accommodation. - A draft Strategy has been developed and is currently subject to public consultation. The draft Strategy can be seen at Appendix 1 and an associated Action Plan at Appendix 2. - Members of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 are invited to consider and provide comment on the contents of the draft Strategy and Action Plan.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 on the draft Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy (Homelessness Strategy)

2022-2026 attached as **Appendix 1** and associated Action Plan attached at **Appendix 2**.

2. Background

2.1 Part 2 of The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on the Authority 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

2.2 The format of the HSP Strategy is prescribed by Welsh Government and follows the guidance and template documents provided to local authorities.

2.3 An Independent Consultant was commissioned to undertake a review on behalf of the Authority. This offered an impartial and fresh perspective for the Strategy. This review has been one of co-production of the Strategy and all key stakeholder groups were surveyed or interviewed, including people that use, or have used homelessness services. Key statistics were analysed along with a review of relevant local and national policies to identify needs.

2.4 The Homelessness Review has provided the necessary information to draft the Strategy as per Welsh Government guidance. The key messages from the review are:

- The period of 2020/2021 saw the highest level of presentations ever recorded by Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC), 1,612 presentations, which was likely influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic and the 'All In' approach.
- In 2021/2022 there were 1,290 applications. This is a decrease in applications from the peak in 2020/2021 however, this number is still a marked increase on presentations compared to the figures at the time of BCBC's 2018 Homelessness Review and Strategy. During 2017/2018, 1,032 homelessness presentations were made, which is fewer than 2021/2022.
- The demand for social housing has increased. The number of new applications added to the Common Housing Register has increased significantly from 147 in 2019/2020, to 428 in 2020/2021 - an increase of 191%. 2021/2022 saw an increase of 104%, with 873 applications and, as at the 20th of February 2023, an increase of 14%, with 993 applications.
- The total number of applicants on the Common Housing Register at the end of each year has increased substantially. During 2019/2020 there were 816 applicants, in 2020/2021 that had increased by 81% to 1,477. During 2021/2022

the figure had increased by a further 45% to 2,143. As at 4th July 2023, there are 2629 applicants on the register.

- The use of temporary accommodation has grown exponentially from pre-Covid levels with figures strongly impacted by the 'All In' approach during and post-Covid. The number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of each financial year is as follows:
 - 2018/2019 - 71 households
 - 2019/2020 – 83 households
 - 2020/2021- 167 households
 - 2021/2022 - 199 households
 - 2022/2023 – 253 households
- Single person households consistently make up a significant proportion of applications. In 2020/21 it was 73% of all applications, in 2021/22 single person applications accounted for 68% of all applications.
- The majority of homelessness applications were from the 25 year+ category at 76% in 2020/21 and 75% in 2021/22.
- Applications from 18 – 24 year olds accounted for 22% in both 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- Applications from 16 – 17 year olds reduced from 6% in 2018/19 to 1% in 2020/21 to 3% in 2021/22.
- There is a lack of private rented accommodation available within the Local Housing Allowance rate in Bridgend. An on-line search on Zoopla as at the 4th July 2023 showed the total number of properties to rent was 44. Of those, the search identified no available properties within the Local Housing Allowance rate for any property size, highlighting the significant lack of private properties available to rent at an affordable rate for those reliant on the Local Housing Allowance.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 On 18th July 2023 Cabinet approved the commencement of a formal public consultation on the draft Strategy and Action Plan as set out at **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2**.
- 3.2 The consultation is currently live and due to end on 12th October 2023. At the end of the consultation period responses will be taken into account and necessary amendments made, with a final Strategy being presented to a future meeting of Cabinet for approval.
- 3.3 The questions asked as part of the public consultation are set out below:
 - Do you agree with the Strategy's aim:

“To work in partnership with stakeholders to prevent homelessness, ensuring that where prevention is not possible, homelessness is rare, brief and unrepeatable. Those who access services will be given the support required to live as independently as possible.”

- Does the Housing Support Programme Strategy clearly explain what challenges the Council faces in delivering homelessness and housing support services?
- Do you agree with the Council’s Strategic Priorities and Objectives as set out in the Strategy?
- Is there anything missing from the Housing Support Programme Strategy that you would like to see included?
- The Action Plan details steps that will be taken to deliver the strategy over a 4 year period. Do you agree with the actions identified?
- Is there anything missing from the Action Plan and what would you like to see included?
- Please use the space to provide any further comments on this draft Housing Support Programme Strategy and the Action Plan

3.4 Members of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 are invited to consider and provide comment on the contents of the documents at **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2**, in the context of the questions set out at paragraph 3.3 above.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 Tackling homelessness is a Welsh Government priority. The report contributes to the following goals within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A prosperous Wales – Reducing homelessness supports a prosperous Wales by reducing cost to the public purse.
- A resilient Wales – Our Housing Support Programme Strategy aims to prevent and relieve homelessness, increasing the resilience of both individuals supported and the general structures in place to support the goal of achieving a position where homelessness in Wales is rare, brief and non recurrent.
- A Wales of cohesive communities – Preventing individuals from becoming homeless will support cohesive communities.
- A globally responsive Wales – Homelessness is an issue across the globe. These strategic documents set out the approach Brdgend will take to support Wales in its efforts around this agenda.

5.2 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.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 The prevention and relief of homelessness supports the agenda around climate change. In considering BCBC's housing need, supply and demand and the intention of delivering affordable housing schemes to meet these needs, schemes will be developed in line with Welsh Government planning and standards requirements, which support moves to tackle climate change.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 Homelessness and housing support services play a key role in supporting BCBC's safeguarding agenda, both from an individual perspective with services often supporting vulnerable individuals, known to safeguarding agencies.

7.2 The priorities set out in the Housing Support Programme Strategy reference a need to improve collaboration with key stakeholders, with specific objectives around improving collaboration to implement the national care leavers and accommodation and support framework, a key part of Corporate Parenting implications.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 consider and provide comment on the draft Housing Support Programme Strategy (Homelessness Strategy) 2022-2026 attached at **Appendix 1** and associated Action Plan attached at **Appendix 2**.

Background documents

None