

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Housing and Environmental Services 28 April 2008
Portfolio Holder meeting
AUTHOR/S: Corporate Manager – Affordable Homes / Housing Advice and
Options Manager

DRAFT HOMELESS STRATEGY 2008 – 2013, FOR CONSULTATION

Purpose

1. To seek approval to consult on the attached draft homeless strategy for 2008 – 2013.
2. This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area of the District

Background

3. The council are required to produce a homeless strategy every 5 years. The previous strategy was published in 2003, and therefore we are required to have a new one in place by July 2008.
4. Significant improvements have been made to the homeless services provided by the Council since July 2003, including:
 - (a) A significant reduction in the numbers of households living in temporary accommodation. The Government set all local authorities the target of reducing the numbers of households in temporary accommodation by half by 2010, SCDC reached our target for this in 2007/08.
 - (b) Minimised use of Bed and breakfast accommodation
 - (c) Increased homelessness prevention. This includes new prevention initiatives including a settled homes scheme and a young person floating support scheme.
 - (d) Introduced a sub-regional choice based lettings scheme and new lettings policy.

Considerations

5. The new homeless strategy aims to address the continued progress the service wish to provide, national and regional targets and priorities, and potential challenges ahead. The action plan accompanying the strategy includes:
 - (a) Monitoring the impact of the new choice based lettings scheme on homelessness.
 - (b) Further reduction in temporary accommodation, including minimal use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
 - (c) Increase homeless prevention.
 - (d) Focus on the accommodation needs of young people.
 - (e) Support to Travellers.
 - (f) Potential hostel re-provision.

- (g) Maximise opportunity raised by being awarded Regional Champion status for the eastern region.
- (h) Meet the KLOE requirements relating to the service.
- (i) Working with partner agencies.
- (j) Ensure value for money
- (k) Increase access to the private sector.
- (l) Equality and diversity needs.
- (m) Housing futures.

Implications

6.	Financial	The strategy will help to address the housing needs within the district and minimise the need for costly emergency accommodation. Some schemes to prevent homelessness may require funding and where possible it is hoped that this will be available within existing budgets.
	Legal	The strategy is a legal requirement.
	Staffing	The activities included within the strategy will be carried out by the existing staffing resources.
	Risk Management	There is a risk that external factors in the housing market may impact on the anticipated outcomes of the homeless strategy.
	Equal Opportunities	The strategy aims to address diversity and equality issues within the service.

Consultations

- 7. During the Homelessness Review surveys were sent to private landlords, RSL's, service providers and previous customers. The feedback received has helped to formulate the strategy and its action plan.
- 8. The draft strategy will be subject to a 12 week consultation period and will be available on the council's website for the public to view and comment. Partner agencies, service providers and parish council will all be contacted directly during the consultation period.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

9.	Affordable Homes	The strategy aims to address housing needs within the district and provide better access to various housing options including social rented, low cost home ownership and private renting.
	Customer Service	Actions will be taken to ensure we meet the requirements of the audit commission KLOE for homelessness and housing need, and customer satisfaction with the service will continue to be sought.
	Northstowe and other growth areas	See affordable homes
	Quality, Accessible Services	Actions within the strategy will enable us to maintain and build on the services which have resulted in the service being named Regional Champions for homelessness for the eastern region.
	Village Life	Through pursuing various housing options and the choice based lettings scheme, customers will have more choice over their housing.
	Sustainability	

Partnership	The strategy aims to build on the successful partnership working that has resulted in an improved service to date.
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Conclusions/Summary

10. A new homeless strategy is required for 2008-2013. The attached draft will be consulted on before endorsement of the final strategy.

Recommendations

11. It is recommended that the attached draft homeless strategy be approved for consultation.

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