



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All Wards

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Overview & Scrutiny Management Board
Cabinet

9th July 2009
13th July 2009

Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

Report of the Service Director, Housing Accommodation and Tenancy Support and the Service Director Housing Renewal & Options

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To consider Leicester's Homelessness Strategy 2008 –2013, attached as Appendix A.

2. Summary

2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places an obligation on housing authorities to review their homelessness service and produce a strategy based on this review. The Council produced its first Homelessness Strategy in 2003. The Council has now produced a second strategy based on a new review of the services provided.

2.2 This strategy aims to prevent homelessness whenever possible and to support and sustain in accommodation the diverse range of people who require the services of the Council and its partners. The strategy is attached; this includes an executive summary.

2.3 The Homelessness strategy supports five of the seven 'One Leicester' priorities:

- Investing in our children
- Planning for people not cars
- Creating thriving, safe communities
- Improving well-being and health
- Investing in skills and enterprise

3. Recommendations

3.1 This report requests Cabinet approve Leicester's Homelessness Strategy and note the delivery plan.

4. Report

Why this strategy has been produced

- 4.1 Leicester's first homelessness strategy was produced in 2003 following a review of homelessness in the City. This was, and still is, a requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002, which requires all authorities to produce a strategy based on the results of a review at least every five years.
- 4.2 A review of homeless services was undertaken in 2008 to establish the extent of homelessness in Leicester, assess its likely extent in the future and identify what is currently being done, and by whom, and what level of resources are available to prevent and tackle homelessness.
- 4.3 The Homelessness Review (2008) highlighted that much has been achieved since the first homelessness strategy; key has been the shift of emphasis to prevention of homelessness and strengthened partnership working. This approach has led to a fall in homelessness over the last five years and many improvements in homelessness services in the City.
- 4.4 A draft Homelessness Strategy was produced in November 2008. Formal consultation on the document has been undertaken between December and March with service users, other council services, registered social landlords, government bodies and voluntary organisations etc.
- 4.5 The strategic priorities of this Homelessness Strategy are:
 1. To prevent homelessness, and to tackle the wider causes of homelessness
 2. To secure accommodation for homeless people across a range of tenures, and to manage and reduce the use of temporary accommodation
 3. To support vulnerable homeless people to access settled homes and establish and sustain independent lives
 4. To deliver high quality, value for money services.
- 4.6 Implementing the delivery plan and improving homelessness services in the city will help the Council sustain its performance against challenging government targets, which include, halving the number of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation and ending rough sleeping by 2012. This strategy is also important to ensure we can meet a number of national indicators, Public Service Agreement targets and be able to assist households during the ongoing economic recession.
- 4.7 It is proposed that the strategy will be implemented using a programme management approach. The Invest in Community and Health & Wellbeing Priority Boards will jointly monitor progress. This is a citywide strategy and delivering this Homelessness Strategy can only be delivered in partnership with other organisations.

Consultation Undertaken

- 4.8 Consultation on the Homelessness Review & Strategy has taken the following forms:

Review Stage

- Stakeholder questionnaire

- Consultation with young people
- Registered social landlord consultation
- Consultation undertaken by Supporting People
- Feedback from various multi-agency forums

Strategy formulation

- Consultation with a range of stakeholders
- Attendance at Domestic Violence Steering Group Meeting

Draft Strategy Consultation Period

- A link to the draft strategy and review sent to all stakeholders and made available online
- Briefing to Cabinet Lead for Housing
- Feedback sessions held with service users across the city
- Service User Event in partnership with Supporting People
- Stakeholder Event in partnership with Supporting People
- Housing & Domestic Violence Workshop
- Discussion at LSHIP (Leicester Social Housing in Partnership)
- One to one meetings to discuss feedback with respondents to the online questionnaire
- On-line feedback questionnaire

4.9 Approval was sought from the previous Cabinet Lead for Housing to start consultation on the draft strategy. It was agreed that following the formal consultation ratification of the draft strategy would be sought from Members.

Feedback from Consultation

4.10 Much of the feedback confirmed points already addressed in the draft strategy or identified during the Supporting People Strategic Review of Homeless Services, completed November 2008 (which has been reflected in the draft strategy). The strategy and or review has been updated with relevant feedback that was not already addressed.

4.11 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed on the strategy and the strategy updated to reflect its findings.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications – Rod Pearson, Head of Finance (Adults & Housing)

Costs of Homelessness Services

The Audit Commission annually reports on the cost of homelessness services. Using the Audit Commission Value for Money tool we can compare our service costs with our nearest neighbours (those local authorities identified as most similar to ourselves). Below are the costs per head of population of homelessness services in 2008:

Authority	Homelessness £'s /head
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Slough	8.71
Leicester	6.95
Peterborough	6.50
Kingston Upon Hull	5.27
Luton	4.05
Blackburn	3.09
Newcastle upon Tyne	2.91
Bradford	2.79
Middlesbrough	2.59
Derby	2.30
Sandwell	2.03
Coventry	1.67
Liverpool	1.62
Wolverhampton	0.97
Nottingham	0.86
Oldham	0.23

Average	3.28
Median	2.69

This indicates there are a wide range of costs of homelessness services (£'s per head) from £8.71 to 23p and that Leicester has a high cost service.

It should be noted that Leicester's published figure includes the cost of housing advice, which should in fact have been charged elsewhere. The cost is therefore overstated. Leicester's published cost per head for the 2009/10 return will be £4.96 (based on 2007 population estimates). Despite this reduction Leicester's cost still appears high and therefore a full benchmarking exercise will be conducted with comparator authorities. The results will be reported initially to the Council's Operational Board and the Thriving and Safe Priority Board to ensure services provided are efficient as well as effective.

Supporting People Funding of Homelessness Services

Leicester receives a grant from the government known as the Supporting People grant. This funds housing related support in the City. Below are the accommodation based and floating support costs of homelessness services in the City (this includes Council, Housing Association and voluntary sector services). These costs include services provided for young people, offenders etc who are vulnerable to homelessness.

	2008/2009 Service Cost	2009/2010 Service cost
Accommodation Based Service	£5,816,986	£5,939,576
Floating Support Service	£1,035,498	£1,060,867
	<u>£6,852,483</u>	<u>£7,000,444</u>

Resourcing the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Expenditure on homelessness services will be kept within allocated budgets.

5.2 Legal Implications – Joanna Bunting, Head of Commercial & Property Law

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a requirement on the Council to carry out a homeless review and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy every five years. The purpose of the review and the function of the strategy is

- a) To prevent homelessness in their area,
- b) To secure that sufficient accommodation is and will be available to people in their area who are or may become homeless, and
- c) To secure the provision of satisfactory support in their area for people who are or who may become homeless or have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

The homelessness strategy has to be taken into account in the exercise of all the Council’s Housing Authority functions.

Within the last five years there have been a number of measures and guidance issued by central government, in particular setting a target of halving the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010, to prevent and tackle youth homelessness including a commitment that by 2010 no 16 or 17 year olds should be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation under the homelessness legislation and to reduce rough sleeping as close as possible to zero. As part of the government’s response to the “credit crunch” it was also predicted that there would be a rise in repossessions as a result of the economic downturn. The government, in particular, has directed through Local Authorities a mortgage rescue scheme.

6. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	Y	4.11	
Policy	N		
Sustainable and Environmental	N		
Crime and Disorder	Y	2.3	
Human Rights Act	N		
Elderly/People on Low Income	N	2.3	

7. Risk Assessment Matrix

Risk	Likelihood L/M/H	Severity Impact L/M/H	Control Actions (if necessary/appropriate)
1. Obligation (set out in the Homelessness Act 2002) for housing	L	L	Homelessness Strategy to be signed off by Cabinet

authorities to review their homelessness service and produce a strategy based on this review not met			
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8. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

Homelessness Strategy 2003 – 2008
Leicester's Homelessness Review 2008

9. Consultations

Councillor Hanif Aqbany (former Cabinet Lead Housing)
Extensive consultation has been carried out in the formulation of this strategy including consultation with service users and other homelessness services providers.

10. Report Author

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Key Decision	Yes
Reason	Is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising more than one ward
Appeared in Forward Plan	Yes
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)