


<p>London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham</p> <p>CABINET</p> <p>11 APRIL 2016</p>	
<p>ADOPTION OF THE COUNCIL'S HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY</p>	
<p>Report of the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion : Councillor Sue Fennimore</p>	
<p>Open Report</p>	
<p>Classification - For Decision</p> <p>Key Decision: YES</p>	
<p>Wards Affected: All</p>	
<p>Accountable Director: Mike England – Lead Director of Housing Options</p>	
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval for the adoption of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy (Annex A). Tackling homelessness and improving services to Homeless people is a key priority for the Administration. This is reflected in the Housing Strategy 2015 action plan (Action 8) **The Council will work with third sector agencies and clients to develop and adopt a homelessness prevention strategy.**
- 1.2 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy sets out the principles underpinning the Council's work in this area and the five key priorities for action which are:
- Shaping Services around early intervention/prevention and a case management approach;
 - Mitigating the effects of Welfare Reform;
 - Improving customer experience and making every contact count;

- Delivering a range of affordable housing solutions;
- Working in partnership with landlords to improve private sector rented housing.

1.3 The strategy sets out the Council's approach and actions to deliver these priorities with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention, partnership working, improving outcomes and a customer focused approach.

1.4 This report seeks to adopt the Homelessness Prevention Strategy attached to this report as Appendix A following an informal consultation process with external and internal stakeholders during January and February 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Homelessness Prevention Strategy be adopted.

3. REASONS FOR DECISION

3.1 The 2002 Homelessness Act places a duty on local authorities to undertake a review of Homelessness for their district and formulate and publish a strategy based on the results of that review. This strategy delivers on this duty and replaces the Homelessness Strategy adopted by the Council in 2012.

3.2 Tackling homelessness and improving services for homeless people is a key priority for this administration and this strategy sets out the Council's priorities for action.

3.3 This report recommends Members adopt the Homelessness Prevention Strategy described above.

4. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

4.1 The development of a new Homelessness Prevention Strategy delivers on a key action from the Council's Housing Strategy, adopted in May 2015, and captured in the related action plan as Housing Strategy Action 8: **'The Council will work with third sector agencies and clients to develop and adopt a homelessness prevention strategy.'**

4.2 The strategy builds on the administration's manifesto pledge to tackle homelessness. The document is intentionally concise, capturing the overall direction of travel, the principles underpinning our work in homelessness and our priorities for action. It will act as a starting point for more detailed engagement and collaboration with partner agencies on the priority areas.

5. PROPOSAL AND ISSUES

- 5.1 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy sets out how the Council will work with the third sector and other stakeholders on homelessness prevention.
- 5.2 It is intended to set out a direction of travel, outlining key principles that will underpin the Council's work in this area and the key priority areas for action.
- 5.3 The Council is already doing some innovative work in homeless prevention and this is captured within the strategy. However there are a number of ongoing local challenges and factors that contribute to homelessness in the borough. These include high rents, high housing prices and a shortage of affordable housing, alongside a national policy context of welfare reform reducing benefit levels, Local Housing Allowances (capping the level of Housing Benefit that can be paid often well below the market rent), continued cuts to local government funding and reduced social rented stock.
- 5.4 Given all of these challenges the council wants to use its resources to the best effect by tackling the causes of homelessness, acting early to prevent people becoming homeless and support those experiencing homelessness and those at risk through the impact of welfare reform. The council needs to align efforts and services across the authority with those of external agencies with a focus on early intervention and prevention to deliver improved outcomes and budget savings over the medium to long term.
- 5.5 The three principles and priorities for actions set out in the strategy are:
- Early intervention and prevention** – we want to shape council services around better identifying and working with those at risk of homelessness and shaping services to address issues at an early stage.
- Partnership working** – The Council has a statutory framework which determines our responsibilities to homeless households. However we recognise that there is a wealth of expertise in the local third sector agencies and we want to ensure better collaboration between council departments and partner agencies to ensure a customer focused cost effective response to homelessness.
- Customer focused approach** – through better partnership working, early intervention and a case management approach we want to make every contact count and reduce customers having to unnecessarily navigate multiple departments and agencies.
- 5.6 Through consultation with stakeholders we have identified the following priorities which will contribute the most towards reducing homelessness in the borough and we have identified some actions that will contribute towards success:

Priority One - Shaping services around early intervention/prevention and a case management approach.

Priority Two - Mitigating the effects of welfare reform.

Priority Three - Improving customer experience and making every contact count.

Priority Four - Delivering a range of affordable housing solutions.

Priority Five - Working with landlords to improve private sector rented housing.

- 5.7 The next step will be to set up a Hammersmith and Fulham Homelessness Forum in order to further develop the actions under these priorities and identify measures of success. The starting point for developing a joint action plan will be to bring together all internal stakeholders across Public Health, Adult Social Care and Children's Services to identify opportunities and initiatives that will contribute towards the priorities.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 In the development of this strategy the Council has undertaken a 'soft' consultation with a range of stakeholder groups working in the advice and homelessness sector. The organisations we have consulted are listed in Annex C.
- 6.2 Stakeholders have broadly endorsed the priorities and approach contained with the strategy and agreed to work with the Council to further develop the areas for action.

7. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The 2010 Equalities Act places an equality duty on local authorities (and other public bodies) to protect people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. To meet this duty, the Council needs to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work when shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It also requires that public bodies :
- have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination
 - advance equality of opportunity
 - foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities
- 7.2 The adoption of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy requires the Council to undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) to fully assess what the positive and negative impacts of adopting the changed approach will be on defined 'equality groups'. These are:
- women
 - black, Asian and ethnic-minority people

- young people and children
- older people
- disabled people
- Lesbian people, gay people, bisexual people and transsexual people
- people from different faith groups

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the development of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy. The strategy has an overall positive impact on several protected characteristics and is neutral on the remainder.

7.3 Implications verified by: Martin Nottage, Innovation & Change Management Tel. 020 8753 1628.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Homeless Act 2002 places a duty on places a duty on local housing authorities to undertake a review of Homelessness for their district and to formulate and publish a strategy based on the results of that review. Sections 1(5) and (6) of the Act requires that housing and social service authorities take the homelessness strategy into account when exercising their functions.
- 8.2 Implications completed by: Janette Mullins Principal Solicitor (Housing Litigation); 0208 753 2744.

9. FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no new financial or resources implications arising from the adoption of the Council's Homelessness Prevention Strategy.
- 9.2 Implications completed by Daniel Rochford, Head of Finance x4203

10. IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS

- 10.1 As part of the homelessness prevention strategy the Council will be promoting good standards amongst landlords and good landlords will benefit from greater efforts to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 Risks associated with the report recommendations remain the responsibility of the Housing Service for their identification and management. The Service maintains a register of risks that are reviewed quarterly by the Management Team ensuring that any risks that escalate are responded to quickly and efficiently.

- 11.2 There are many risk factors associated with homelessness such as substance abuse and mental health problems, but these problems may also arise as a consequence of homelessness. The social, emotional and financial costs of homelessness are significant creating barriers to education, work and training and undermining mental and physical health. Episodes of homelessness bring risks to the household concerned and this strategy will help minimise those risks. Increased levels of homelessness pose a financial risk to the Council and those risks will be mitigated by using less temporary accommodation especially bed and breakfast.
- 11.3 Implications verified by: Michael Sloniowski, Shared Services Risk Manager telephone 020 8753 2587

12. PROCUREMENT AND IT STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no procurement implications directly arising from this report.
- 12.2 Implications verified/completed by Robert Hillman, Procurement Consultant x 1538

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT**

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1.	None		

LIST OF APPENDICES:

- Annex A – Homelessness Prevention Strategy
 Annex B – Equalities Impact Assessment
 Annex C – List of stakeholders Consulted