



PART B:	RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL
REPORT TO:	POLICY AND RESOURCES
DATE:	18 JUNE 2015
REPORT OF THE:	HEAD OF PLANNING AND HOUSING GARY HOUSDEN
TITLE OF REPORT:	HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2015/20
WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek members' approval for the draft 2015/2020 Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan (Annex A).

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that members approve the draft 2015/2020 Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 The draft strategy replaces the previous North Yorkshire Homelessness Strategy. In previous years there has been a Joint Homelessness Strategy covering North Yorkshire, with each local authority developing individual local authority action plans. It has been agreed across the sub region that each local authority going forward would develop its own Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan. This was in response to the government aim that all Housing Options services need to be working towards a "Gold Standard". Officers have developed the draft strategy following consultation with partners and stakeholders. The strategy and action plan needs to be approved by Members prior to adoption.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS

- 4.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all housing authorities must have in place a Homelessness Strategy based on a review of homelessness within their district. This is required to be reviewed every five years. The review of the strategy commenced in 2014. It is a requirement that the draft homelessness strategy is adopted in order to meet statutory requirements.

5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Following publication of the governments first national housing policy in 2011, “Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England”, the emphasis on homelessness prevention was very clear. In August 2012 the ministerial group on homelessness published its national homelessness strategy: “Making Every Contact Count”
- 5.2 Ryedale’s homelessness strategy is further underpinned by the North Yorkshire, York and East Riding Housing Strategy 2015-20. This strategy includes an objective on the prevention of homelessness. Ryedale’s Homelessness Strategy will ensure that proposals under that objective have been highlighted and will be developed and monitored at a local level. The council will continue to work closely with the other local authorities across the LEP area on homelessness issues and share good practice in the implementation of its homelessness strategy.
- 5.3 The Ryedale Housing Forum, a large group of local agencies and services, helped to develop the draft strategy through a homelessness strategy steering group. The group consulted local organisations and stakeholders about their concerns and their ideas for maintaining and developing future services.
- 5.4 The steering group then planned and held a consultation event in Ryedale with partner agencies with its focus on homelessness. This raised awareness about the services provided for homelessness to households across the district. The consultation was based around five key objectives which are listed in Paragraph 6.7 of this report . The consultation involved exploring potential developments for the future. The feedback from agencies has been incorporated into the strategy.
- 5.5 In addition the housing services department undertakes regular customer consultation. This is through face to face consultation, questionnaires following advice interviews and exit forms from all temporary accommodation provided.

REPORT

6.0 REPORT DETAILS

- 6.1 Ryedale’s five year strategy sets out the Council’s aim to tackle homelessness across the district and details how the Council will provide housing options services for the residents of Ryedale.
- 6.2 The strategy recognises the important role that other partners and stakeholders have to play in harnessing skills and delivering sensitive and tailored solutions to some of the issues within our community.
- 6.3 In recognition of the fact that homelessness can be devastating, and is seldom a problem in isolation; the provision of accommodation without considering all contributory factors and aiming to provide specialist support and assistance to address those problems is not a solution. A holistic approach ensures that health, employment, income, social isolation, relationships and other issues affecting individuals’ ability to maintain their home are considered.
- 6.4 It has long been recognised that the prevention of homelessness is more cost-effective for authorities than dealing with its consequences. Resources deployed to prevent homelessness saves on costs long-term and helps to alleviate the crisis for

the client. To achieve this in the current economic downturn the emphasis must be on partnership working, sharing resources and employing creative solutions

- 6.5 Local authorities and their partners must increasingly work under ongoing financial constraints. Therefore working together - including early and positive intervention - is considered to be the key to success. Prevention considered to be better than the cure.
- 6.6 This plan fits into the overall aims and visions of Ryedale District Council's Housing Strategy Action Plan. This strategy and action plan details the services and initiatives in place to achieve these goals and will highlight any gaps in service and future development needs.

Working with our partners across Ryedale, the Council aims to achieve the following:

- encourage people to seek assistance before they reach a homelessness crisis
- enable people to stay in their own homes whenever possible through appropriate advice, support, information and assistance
- work together to ensure an holistic approach to clients' difficulties
- identify suitable housing options for those who cannot remain in their current situation
- increase the availability of new affordable homes
- ensure that the Private Rental Sector plays a larger role in homelessness prevention

6.7 **This will be achieved by meeting 5 key objectives:**

- **1.Reduce homelessness through prevention**
- **2.Reduce the use and improve the quality of temporary accommodation**
- **3.Reduce the incidence of youth homelessness**
- **4.Improve access to support services and advice to prevent homelessness and increase sustainability**
- **5.Increase the supply of affordable housing**

6.8 **Review over the past 5 years**

6.9 During the period of the last homelessness strategy, progress has continued to be made towards reaching homelessness targets. There continues to be an increase in number of households approaching the Housing Services department on an annual basis. This is up 31% from 2010 figures. There were 713 new enquiries during 2014/15, additional improvements and service developments include:

- 29% reduction in the number of individuals presenting as homeless
- 228 homeless preventions
- 66% reduction in the number of households accepted as homeless
- 26% reduction in the average length of time spent in temporary accommodation
- 46% reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation
- Development of a 14 unit supported accommodation project in Norton

- Reduction of spending on temporary accommodation by 88% over the past five years.
- Securing of funding from Crisis for a Shared Solutions Officer in partnership with Foundation (lasting for three years - until March 2016)
- Employment of a part time Lettings Officer funded through sub regional funding
- Taken over the management of two properties in Malton, allowing six rooms to let for employed single people
- Negotiation of the leasing of a House in Multiple Occupation in Norton providing five rooms to let for housing clients.
- Development of a sub regional Rural Spot purchase scheme to provide intensive support for preventing rough sleeping
- Securing of Moving Forward training, funded through sub regional funding; staff trained to provide pre-tenancy training to single households
- Development of a Private Sector Landlord Officer role to encourage the take up of landlords working directly with the council
- Development of Ryedale Homeshare scheme to match potential lodgers to hosts
- Expansion of the use of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to assist those affected by welfare reforms. 45 applications received in 2011/12, rising to 407 in 2013/14
- Continuation of participation of the Breathing Space scheme in partnership with Wakefield Council to assist clients with mortgage arrears.
- Development of a social sector arrears referral scheme to ensure those living in social housing are referred to the council once arrears reach a level of £500 to enable advice and assistance can be given to prevent homelessness.
- Successful completion of a safeguarding audit for children and vulnerable adults
- Partnership work to improve services to young people through the Young Persons Partnership, co-located NYCC Homeless Prevention Officer (16 and 17 years olds) into Housing Services department.
- Secondment of Homelessness Prevention Officer to Housing Services to improve services for 18 to 25 year olds, funded through Supporting People
- Development of a joint Home Improvement Agency with Scarborough Borough Council to include a wellbeing and handyperson service.
- Completion of an extension to the traveller site providing 7 additional pitches.
- Expansion of the Ryedale Food Bank service, through partnership working, to include new premises in Norton.
- Employment of a Development Officer funded through affordable housing commuted sums
- Development of 348 affordable homes.

6.10 **During the next five years the council and its partners will:**

6.11 **Objective one:
Preventing homelessness**

- Continue to raise awareness of changes of welfare reform through the Housing Forum partners
- Achieve 'Gold Standard' for the Housing Options service
- Use local media to raise awareness and outline services which can help by developing a communications strategy for the Housing Options service

- Increase the capacity of the Ryedale Lettings service
- Improve access to the Private Rented Sector (PRS) by discharging duty into this sector homeless households
- Continue to operate Sharing Solutions and seek alternative funding from 2016
- Ensure the safeguarding of children and adults is paramount in all services provided
- Promote the 'Private Sector offer' to landlords
- Expand the arrears case referral scheme to all registered providers operating across Ryedale
- Continue to offer mortgage repossession schemes
- Continue to provide a money advice service through the Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Target resources on prevention for single people
- Increase amount of accommodation suitable for single people
- Continue joint working internally on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)
- Work with Homes and Communities Agency on available funding
- Continue to provide the 'No Second Night Out' protocol and 'Winter Warmth'
- Ensure all Housing Options staff are fully trained
- Ensure 'Moving Forward' tenancy training is provided in all supported housing
- Ensure disrepair issues in the private sector are dealt with quickly to reduce homelessness

**6.12 Objective 2:
Reduce the use of, and improve the quality of temporary accommodation**

- Continue to keep Bed & Breakfast usage to a minimum
- Maintain low numbers of households in temporary accommodation
- Ensure resettlement is used to its full potential
- Maintain the standard of accommodation
- Ensure residents have access to support, education and training opportunities
- Fulfil the Management Agreement with Yorkshire Housing
- Provide safe accommodation for those affected by domestic abuse
- Increase access to the Private Rented Sector to facilitate move on
- Ensure all residents of temporary accommodation have support plans to enable them to move forward in life
- Regularly consult with clients in temporary accommodation to improve the quality of their service

**6.13 Objective three:
Reduce the incidence of youth homelessness**

- Continue to provide a specialised mediation and advice service to 16 to 25 year olds in partnership
- Provide emergency safe and sound accommodation for young people
- Continued to provide accommodation for those that cannot return home through the Young People's Partnership
- Support the continuation of the partnership post 2016
- Identify young people at risk of disengaging with society
- Ensure appropriate referrals are made to guarantee needs are met in multi agency approach
- Offer education and training opportunities for all residents of the Pathway

- Ensure young people have a voice in the services provided.
- Look at any available funding to improve accommodation options for young people

6.14 **Objective 4:**

Improve access to support services and advice to prevent homelessness and increase sustainability

- Planned moves for clients that are being released from prison and high risk offenders
- To continue to offer specialist housing support to vulnerable clients once they have been housed
- Continue to provide specialised support services to enable clients to sustain tenancies
- Improve referrals to new drug and alcohol services
- Continue to be involved in Supporting People's procurement of services for vulnerable people
- Look at the options for housing support for older people
- Remain a partner of North Yorkshire Home Choice
- Continue to work with Stonham Support Service to provide floating support for clients needing this service
- Offer support and financial assistance for older people and people with disabilities to maintain and adapt their homes
- Continue to support the North Yorkshire tenancy strategy
- Continue to work with North Yorkshire County Council, Horton and the traveller community to address the housing and support needs of gypsies and travellers

6.15 **Objective five:**

Increase the supply of affordable housing

- Delivery of 375 affordable homes during the life of the new strategy
- Look at Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and other shared housing as means of developing other sources of affordable housing
- Look at options to review the 2011 Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Support the work of the Rural Housing Enabler to assist in the supply of exception sites.
- Further work to complete the Affordable Housing supplementary planning guidance
- Provide a Section 106 check list to standardise requirements in order to assist in the delivery of affordable housing

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The following implications have been identified:

a) Financial

Success to date and the majority of the priorities, actions and targets within the action plan is not dependant on securing additional government funding or increased council revenue spend. The focus is on how positive outcomes can be achieved by making best use of existing resources especially though partnership

and dialogue. The Council allocates £83K a year from the governments Homelessness Prevention Grant.

Effective homeless services make an important contribution to reducing the resource burden on other statutory services such as health, social care, the police and the wider criminal justice system.

- b) Legal
The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that all local authorities must have adopted a Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.
- c) Annex B shows the Equalities Impact Assessment. There are no additional staffing implications.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

8.1 Delivering the Homeless Strategy

Whilst the provision of a housing options service is a statutory duty of the Council the actual delivery of the service relies on the support of many formal and informal partners. Moving forward we will need to work closely with these partners if the Council is to realise the ambitions of the strategy. Partnership working will become increasingly critical in the light of government funding cuts and the continuing need to demonstrate value for money

8.2 Monitoring

The action plan will be a tool for monitoring progress against milestones and targets. It will be monitored and reviewed by the Council annually.

The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group will continue to monitor the strategy. They will consider progress made during the year and will actively contribute to setting new priorities and targets for the future.

The responsibility for reporting progress will rest with the Senior Housing Options Officer (SHOO). There will be formal monitoring of all elements of the Housing Strategy Action Plan including the Homelessness Strategy. Responsibility for this will rest with the Housing Services Manager (HSM)

- 8.3 In these times of reduced public funding and challenging welfare reforms, it is more important than ever to ensure that homeless prevention remains at the top of the agenda and that through close partnership working, that the homelessness service provided by the Council, is effective and that it provides a high quality service in order to improve the lives of those people faced with homelessness.

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Background Papers:
Draft Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2015/20
Homelessness Strategy Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers are available for inspection at:
Location or web address