

HOMELESSNESS (STATUTORY NEED) STRATEGY

Responsible Cabinet Member: Councillor Long (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Housing)

Report Sponsor: Linda Ellen (Acting Service Director Housing and Community) Tel: 01908 253498

Author and contact: Eleanor Nickless (Housing Services Manager) Tel: 01908 253032

Executive Summary:

Tackling the growing problem of homelessness is a top priority for the Council as set out in the Council Plan 2016-2020.

Milton Keynes Council commissioned the Housing Quality Network (HQN) to develop a Homelessness Strategy to improve the Council's ability to discharge its responsibilities to those the Council has a statutory duty to house.

The Strategy overlaps with other related priorities to support the wider homelessness problem. In September 2016, Cabinet approved a report into tackling the needs of non-statutory homeless people - it recommended that the Council should set up a Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership. In December 2016, Cabinet endorsed a report that set out the priority objectives and recommendations of the Homelessness Partnership to provide emergency short-term shelter for those in crisis and requiring immediate support, and emergency support for those without accommodation including sanitary facilities and an outreach assessment service.

In July 2016, Cabinet agreed that the Draft Homelessness Strategy should be circulated for consultation. The consultation period ended on 5 December 2016. Limited responses were received and the Strategy has not been amended as a result of the comments received.

However, the Strategy was amended to include the following recommendations from Cabinet:

- Consider how the Homelessness (Statutory Need) Strategy aligns with the emerging work on non-statutory homelessness and the implementation of the Homelessness Task and Finish Group Report to ensure a single unified approach to all Homelessness across the Council and wider City.
- Consider developing a scheme with the private rented sector to secure longer term assured tenancies.
- Consider ways to prevent homeless applicants from the parental family home, with the exception of violent situations.
- Consider how applicants should be required to access training and education opportunities, where appropriate.

This report recommends that Cabinet adopt the Homelessness (Statutory Need) Strategy.

Councillor Nigel Long
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Housing

1 Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the Homelessness (Statutory Need) Strategy be adopted.

2 Issues

- 2.1 In July 2016, the Cabinet agreed that the Draft Homelessness Strategy should be circulated for consultation.
- 2.2 The consultation period ran from 12 September to 5 December 2016.
- 2.3 The **Annex** to this report sets out the comments received from those that responded.
- 2.4 The Strategy has not been amended as a result of the comments received.
- 2.5 As at 31 January the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation had increased to 618 households (although the number in hotels/bed and breakfast had declined to 46 households).

3 Options

- 3.1 **Do Nothing:** The Council has a statutory duty to prepare a Homelessness Strategy and therefore this option is not recommended.
- 3.2 **Adopt the Strategy:** The Strategy sets out an effective way of tackling statutory homelessness. This is the recommended option.

4 Implications

4.1 Policy

The Strategy provides a vision for the future service, underpinned by objectives and actions to deliver these objectives. The Strategy will be a key way by which the Council delivers on Priority 3: Homelessness in the Corporate Plan 2016-2020.

4.2 Resources and Risk

The Financial Sustainability Plan for 2017/18 to 2020/21 noted that one of the areas of substantially increased demand for Council services included *'...temporary accommodation for people who were entitled to statutory support at a time of decreasing availability of Council housing, resulting in unprecedented additional costs of £3.2m in 2017/18.'*

It further noted that *'...the success of Milton Keynes means more people are moving to the area. The value of houses is increasing, as is the cost of private rental sector homes, which contributes to more people having a statutory requirement for rehousing. We are also seeing a reduction in the numbers of people moving from our own housing, so reducing the numbers of properties available for rehousing. We expect the numbers of people who will be entitled to housing over the next four years to increase to 105 per month (compared to 56 per month in 2016/17 to date), alongside a reduction to 25 council houses available for housing per month (compared to 40 per month in 2016/17 to date). The cost of this over the next four years will have risen by £3.0m per year (compared to service cost of £3.21m in 2015/16). We are working on alternative temporary accommodation to partially alleviate this additional cost.'*

At this point it is hard to quantify the exact financial benefits that the Strategy will produce. As the Strategy is implemented and the benefits become more quantifiable, the budget impacts will be brought through the Council’s budget-setting and Medium Term Financial Planning processes.

The Strategy’s Action Plan indicates that most of the actions can be resourced from existing budgets. Where additional costs are indicated, they may be able to be met from ‘Invest to Save’ funding.

The “Do Nothing” option (not recommended) would reduce the scope for such planned budget savings.

N	Capital	N	Revenue	N	Accommodation
N	IT	Y	Medium Term Plan	N	Asset Management

4.9 Carbon and Energy Management

None

4.10 Legal

The Council has a legal duty to secure housing for homeless families (Housing Act 1996).

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to have a Strategy for preventing homelessness in their district.

The Care Act 2014 recognises the contribution of housing to the care and support system (as ‘suitable housing’ is one of the nine areas of wellbeing in the Act).

The Homelessness Reduction Bill was recently given its second reading in Parliament. If, as seems likely, it becomes law, the Council will have further duties with regards to the advice and assistance that it offers all homeless households.

4.11 Other Implications

Y	Equalities/Diversity	N	Sustainability	N	Human Rights
N	E-Government	N	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

The Council’s Equality Policy and Scheme 2012-2016 makes it clear that Equality, Diversity and Cohesion are key ingredients in building a diverse, competent workforce, excellent people-centred services and promoting the general well-being of Milton Keynes’ communities and its citizens. It lies at the very heart of everything we do in employing people, providing services to people and in shaping the place they live and work. This is encapsulated in the Council’s Equality Vision: **‘Improve the way we engage, think, plan and act to deliver equality and accessibility for everyone, every day’**. Co-ordinating the activities of groups that work to alleviate homelessness will in turn help the Council to deliver this Vision.