

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING**

**REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

<b>Report prepared by Neil Coles</b>
<b>Date Issued: 14 August 2014</b>

**1. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2014-19**

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

- 1.1.1 To consider the adoption of the council's Homelessness Strategy 2014-19. A copy of which is attached to this report as Appendix A.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Housing and Community Services

- 1.2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing adopts the Homelessness Strategy 2014-19.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 Under the 2002 Homelessness Act, it is a statutory requirement for all local housing authorities to publish a Homelessness Strategy at least every five years.
- 1.3.2 The Homelessness Strategy frames how the council will work to address homelessness in the borough over the next 5 years. It includes an action plan of the council's intended activities to prevent homelessness and to ensure sufficient provision of accommodation and support for households that are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- 1.3.3 The strategy has been prepared following the completion of the council's Homelessness Review completed in January 2014, and which was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 November 2013. The draft strategy was also considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 March 2014 and the Committee's comments have been included in the strategy document.
- 1.3.4 The Homelessness Review identified a number of key findings, including:
- The number of homelessness decisions made by the Council has increased significantly since April 2011;
  - The number of cases accepted as homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need has also increased since 2010;

- The number of single male homeless households is increasing;
- "Parents" no longer willing to accommodate remains the main reason for homeless, followed by "termination of assured shorthold tenancy";
- Homelessness preventions have decreased, although this is most likely to be as a result of changes to how homelessness decisions are recorded by local authorities;
- Landlord possession claims have increased steadily since 2006, with a corresponding increase in the number of possession orders granted (albeit at a much lower);
- Mortgage repossessions orders have decreased since 2009/10 although they remain at a higher level than before the financial downturn, and;
- Levels of rough sleeping have decreased since 2010.

#### 1.3.5 The strategy has been framed around 5 key objectives:

- Preventing homelessness amongst local residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness;
- Securing sufficient levels of appropriate accommodation within Maidstone to house homeless households;
- Ensuring vulnerable households have access to appropriate support to enable them to live independently;
- Reducing health inequalities amongst homeless households, and;
- Strengthening partnership working at local, county, and national level.

#### 1.3.6 The strategy aims to deliver a range of actions to address three key priorities:

- Priority 1 – The prevention of homelessness;
- Priority 2 – The provision of accommodation for homeless and at risk households, and;
- Priority 3 – The support for vulnerable households.

#### 1.3.7 The actions are contained within the action plan that forms Appendix A of the Homelessness Strategy

### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

#### 1.4.1 If the council does not adopt a Homelessness Strategy it will not be complying with the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002.

1.4.2 The adoption of a homelessness strategy provides a strategic and operational focus for preventing homelessness and reducing its negative impacts.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 Addressing homelessness within the borough will assist the council to meet its priority for Maidstone to be a decent place to live.

1.5.2 Homelessness can present a negative impact on the local economy as homeless households are less financially active and increasing homelessness has a detrimental effect on economic stability.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There is a risk that actions contained within the strategy may not be completed. Delivery of the action plan by the Housing Service will be monitored through the council's performance management systems to ensure compliance.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management

X
X

1.7.2 There is a financial impact resulting from the council's obligation to provide emergency temporary accommodation to certain homeless households. Reducing homelessness will have a positive budgetary impact.

1.7.3 An Equality Impact Needs Assessment will be completed on completion of the strategy.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices - Appendix A: Homelessness Strategy 2014-19

1.8.2 Background Documents

1.8.3 Homelessness Review – January 2014

**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

Yes

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No

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If yes, this is a Key Decision because: All wards affected

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Wards/Parishes affected: All

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**How to Comment**

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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