

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY, LEISURE SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report prepared by Neil Coles

Date Issued: 28 January 2014

1. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2014-19

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the draft Homelessness Strategy currently being formulated.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Housing and Community Services

1.2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee provides comments to the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services concerning the priorities and actions that are included in the Homelessness Strategy.

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 provides a plan of the local authority's intended activities to prevent homelessness and to ensure sufficient provision of accommodation and support for households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

1.3.3 The draft 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.

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, although the number of orders actually granted are much lower and have only seen a gradual increase
- Mortgage repossessions orders have decreased since 2009/10 although they remain at a higher level than before the financial downturn
- 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.

1.4 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.

1.5 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 does present a negative impact on the local economy 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. The action plan will be monitored through the council's performance management systems to ensure compliance.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

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

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 1: Draft Homelessness Strategy 2014-19

1.8.2 Background Documents

1.8.3 Homelessness Review – January 2014

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

No

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.

Cllr J Wilson

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