

**Safer Neighbourhoods and
Active Communities
Scrutiny Board**

**Thursday 25 January, 2018 at 5 pm
in Annexe 1, at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Agenda

(Open to Public and Press)

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Members to declare:-
 - (a) any interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting;
 - (b) the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.
3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2017 as a correct record.
4. Preparing for the Homelessness Reduction Act.

J Britton
Chief Executive
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution:

Councillor Edis (Chair);
Councillor Goult (Vice-Chair);
Councillor Hevican (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Allcock, Bawa, Ashman, Hadley, Phillips, R Price, Underhill and
White;
Mr M Babb (Co-opted member).

**Agenda prepared by Alex Goddard
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Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

Apologies for Absence

The Board will receive any apologies for absence from the members of the Board.

Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

Declaration of Interests

Members to declare:-

- (a) any interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting;
- (b) the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.

Minutes of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

**23rd November 2017 at 5.00pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Edis (Chair);
Councillors Allcock, Ashman and Phillips.

Apologies: Councillors Hevican, R Price, Underhill and White.

In attendance: Chief Superintendent Baker (Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board);
L Hill (West Bromwich Business Improvement District);
Sergeant Westwood (West Midlands Police);
Alan Caddick (Director – Housing and Communities).

6/17

Discussion with Chair of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board

The Chair of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board, Chief Superintendent Baker of West Midlands Police, attended the meeting and provided an update on that Board, its sub-groups and the recent peer review that had been carried out.

The Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board was comprised of senior representatives from a wide range of partners including the Police, Fire Service, the Council, Probation and Health organisations as well as representatives of the third sector, education, elected members and members of the community. The Board worked to reduce crime and reoffending in Sandwell.

The Police and Crime Board had six sub-groups:-

- Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP);
- Community Safety Planning Group (CSPG);
- Sandwell Drug & Alcohol Partnership (SDAP);
- CONTEST Board;
- Integrated Offender Management Board;
- Youth Offending Service Board.

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Each of these sub-groups had specific areas of responsibility and focus and were comprised of representatives of the key partners. The Youth Offending Service Board was statutory and focussed on young people up to the age of 18, or in certain circumstances to the age of 24.

The peer review had been commissioned and undertaken to ensure alignment with the Vision 2030 and West Midlands Police priorities as well to ensure the work of the Board was robust on violence prevention and adverse childhood experiences. The review included a full consultation exercise with partners and stakeholders. Feedback from the review had indicated that while the Board was delivering effectively on its aims, a refocussing of efforts could be beneficial.

From the comments and questions by members of the Scrutiny Board the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- The Safer Sandwell Partnership was holding a workshop in January 2018, which would be considering modern slavery, which included labour exploitation, sex exploitation and domestic servitude.
- There was a multi-agency group, chaired by the Council, that was looking at exploitation and modern slavery. Sandwell was one of the most proactive areas in the West Midlands on this issue, but it was recognised that there was still more work to be done.
- The Cabinet had recently agreed a Modern Slavery Statement and Policy.
- Labour exploitation was considered the largest type of modern slavery and awareness raising across the partnership, including the third sector and communities, was taking place.
- West Midlands Police had undertaken a restructure, with further savings being made through increasing effectiveness and efficiency measures.
- Nationally there had been an increase in crime, and this was reflected locally. Anecdotal evidence suggested that in areas that had switched to Universal Credit, there had been upturns in thefts of petrol and from shops.

The Board thanked Chief Superintendent Baker for attending the meeting.

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Resolved that an update on the response to modern slavery in Sandwell be included in the work programme for Scrutiny.

7/17

Public Space Protection Orders

The Board received an update on Public Space Protection Orders (known as PSPOs) in Sandwell from the Director – Housing and Communities. A representative of West Bromwich Business Improvement District (BID) and the Police Sergeant for West Bromwich Town Centre also attended the meeting to contribute to the discussion.

PSPOs had been previously discussed for introduction in Sandwell, particularly in West Bromwich Town Centre, but had not come to fruition. The Director advised the Board that resolving this issue was a priority and that he would be seeking a positive working relationship with the West Bromwich BID, the Police and other stakeholders.

The representative of the West Bromwich BID and the Police Sergeant addressed the meeting to share their concerns about levels of anti-social behaviour and crime in the town centre.

From the comments and questions by members of the Scrutiny Board the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- There was a strict process that had to be followed to introduce a PSPO in an area. This included a statutory consultation period with a wide range of groups and individuals including the Chief Constable, the Police and Crime Commissioner, local businesses and the public in the area covered by the proposed PSPO.
- It was vital to get agreement on the area to be covered by a PSPO and this would need to be done collaboratively with key stakeholders.
- The BID was working closely with the Police to try to resolve issues in West Bromwich town centre and welcomed the Council's support.

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- The Police were able to use various powers to address issues around gangs including behaviour contracts.
- PSPOs could have a deterrent effect, reducing instances of anti-social behaviour and crime within the areas covered by such orders.
- It was felt that CCTV could help deter crime and anti-social behaviour, particularly through dome cameras which were possible to control better, reducing camera blackspots. It was noted that there were various CCTV systems in West Bromwich town centre, but due to being in different ownership they were not linked together.
- All of the shopping centres within West Bromwich town centre were on the Shop Link radio system, allowing easy communication between businesses and the local police to help stop shoplifters or other security and crime issues.
- While a PSPO was likely to be beneficial for West Bromwich town centre, it was not the only way that the Council and the Police could address the issues affecting the town. A more co-ordinated approach, deploying resources based on intelligence and proactive ways of working would be needed to address the concerns of local businesses and visitors to the town centre.

Members thanked the attendees for contributing to the discussion and welcomed the intention to strengthen working relationships between the Council, Police and West Bromwich BID.



Resolved that an update on the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order in West Bromwich Town Centre be included in the work programme for Scrutiny.

(Meeting ended at 6.07pm)

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| Contact Officer: Alex Goddard Democratic Services Unit 0121 569 3178 |
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REPORT TO SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY BOARD

25 January 2018

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| Subject: | Preparing for the Homelessness Reduction Act |
| Cabinet Portfolio: | Councillor Kerrie Carmichael - Cabinet Member for Housing |
| Director: | Director - Housing and Communities - Alan Caddick |
| Contribution towards Vision 2030: |   |
| Contact Officer(s): | <p>Stephen Gabriel – Service Manager Housing Management, stephen_gabriel@sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>Neville Rowe – Housing Strategy and Research Manager neville_rowe@sandwell.gov.uk</p> |

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board:

1. Consider and comment on the preparations being made for the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act that will take effect from 3 April 2018.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act, which is due to be implemented on 3rd April 2018, represents a significant change to the way the Council will tackle homelessness in future. In summary, the Act places far greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness, early intervention and for the first time a clear responsibility on the part of those

affected to take appropriate actions to help resolve their homelessness. This report sets out how officers are preparing to implement the Act for when it takes effect in April.

2 **IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION**

- 2.1 Preventing and reducing homelessness in all its forms contributes to improving a wide range of health and well-being cohorts that have a direct impact on Sandwell's Vision. In particular it will impact on Ambitions Two and Five.

3 **BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 The Homelessness Reduction Bill became an Act of Parliament on the 27th April 2017. The Act will take effect from 3rd April 2018 and introduces three major new duties on local authorities, namely to:
1. **assess** all eligible applicants and agree an individual Personal Housing Plan
 2. take reasonable steps to **prevent** homelessness
 3. **relieve** homelessness by helping the applicant to secure accommodation.
- 3.2 Local authorities (LAs) must **assess** and provide meaningful assistance to everyone who presents as either homeless or is threatened with homelessness, regardless of any priority need. The applicant must be notified in writing of the outcome of the assessment and the LA must seek to gain agreement from the customer on the reasonable steps to be taken by both the customer and the Council within the personal housing plan.
- 3.3 The **Prevention Duty** applies to applicants threatened with homelessness within 56 days instead of the current 28. This duty itself lasts for 56 days and only ends if the prevention assistance works, the 56 days has elapsed (though this period can be extended) or if the applicant becomes homeless – in which case the Relief Duty applies.
- 3.4 The **Relief Duty** also lasts for 56 days with the option to extend. Unless referred to another authority the LA must take reasonable steps to help the applicant ensure that accommodation becomes available to them for at least six months' duration. Of note reasonable steps in the prevention duty and relief duty are limited to 'help secure' accommodation, rather than to ensure. Local authorities are still responsible for securing accommodation for homeless households owed the 'main duty', i.e. those who are eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.
- 3.5 For the first time the Act places a specific duty on the part of the customer to take steps to either prevent or relieve their homelessness as detailed in

their personal housing plan. In addition, and not legislated before, the 'Duty to Refer' requires public authorities specified in the regulations to notify a housing authority of service users they consider may be homeless or threatened with homelessness provided they have the relevant consent from the individual concerned. This part of the legislation however will not take effect until October.

3.6 The Homelessness Reduction Act clearly represents a significant change to the way in which the Council will tackle homelessness. In particular, the Council will need to take the following into consideration in order to adapt and to comply with the forthcoming legislative requirements:

- A significant cultural change, with associated realignments of service provision and recruitment
- Respond to the likely increase in demand on services in both the number of presentations and additional time/resource needed for each case
- Meet the additional costs incurred in service delivery although limited Government funding has been allocated via the New Burdens Funding as detailed in Section 7.
- Ensure that the necessary IT is in place to administer the day to day operation of the Act
- Deliver Member training and wider Council staff training of the new approach
- Design new Personal Housing Plans. It is estimated that upwards of 10 variations will be required and will cover specific groups of people outlined in the new Code of Guidance including:
 - People released from prison or youth detention accommodation
 - Care leavers
 - Former members of the regular armed forces
 - Victims of domestic abuse
 - People leaving hospital
 - People suffering from a mental illness or impairment
- Train partner organisations to assist customers including completion of Personal Housing Plans (PHPs)
- Review current Council website
- Develop a more formal and structured outreach provision
- Review and design a distinct set of protocols aimed at specific client groups as identified in the Code of Guidance as outlined above.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Over the last three years the number of approaches to the Housing Choice Service and subsequent cases opened has remained steady, with 4,163 opened in 2014/15, 4,220 in 2015/16 and 4,215 in 2016/17. Current trends for this financial year suggest a similar level of presentations. From cases opened during this time, just under three-quarters of the main causes for approach to the service were:

- Parents/relatives no longer willing to accommodate (27%)
- Termination of assured shorthold tenancy (20%)
- Relationship breakdown non-violent (11%)
- Relationship breakdown violence from partner (11%)
- Loss of National Asylum Seeker Support (NASS) (5%)

4.2 Exactly half of all households presenting in 2016/17 were single persons, with a further 38% of households containing at least one child aged 16 or under. Based on 2016/17 figures, the Council's Housing Choice Service assists and succeeds in enabling around a third of all households who present to the service to either remain in their existing home or obtain alternative accommodation.

4.3 With these figures in mind combined with the likely increase in service user presentations and increased resource allocation for each case following the introduction of the Act, officers have undertaken a number of actions to ensure the Council is ready to fulfil the forthcoming legislative requirements. Supported by a project board that meets weekly to monitor progress, a detailed Delivery Plan (attached as Appendix One) has been drawn up. The plan is enclosed as part of this report and covers:

- Strategic development
- Partnership working, joint protocols & resources
- Service realignment & channel shift
- Consultation, marketing & communication
- ICT & systems redesign
- Provision of accommodation
- Workforce development & channel shift
- Performance management & monitoring & review

4.4 Further afield the Council has also been successful in bidding and subsequently securing funding for a Local Government Association Housing Advisor. The advisor is currently providing a critical eye and assisting in the development of a revised front-line service. The Council has also benefitted from National Practitioner Support Service HRA Training that has involved two HRA training sessions for staff from Local

Service Centres, Housing Choice, Adults and Legal service areas of the Council.

- 4.5 Engagement with wider housing sector partners including the third sector is also a key component in preparing for the Act and to that end a Homelessness Partner event was held on 14 December. From this event a steering group is being developed to deliver a holistic 'whole borough' approach to tackling homelessness. Member training is clearly very much part of the 'whole borough' approach and as such a Cabinet workshop dedicated to the HRA is being prepared for with a date yet to set. From this workshop wider Member training will commence so that all Members are familiar with the components of the legislation, in particular the implications of customer responsibilities incorporated within their individual housing plans.
- 4.6 Under the 2002 Homelessness Act, local authorities are required to produce on a five-year cycle (as a minimum) a homelessness review and a Homelessness Strategy that sets out the strategic direction that the local authority will take to tackle homelessness. The Council has recently produced a Homelessness Needs Assessment as required by the Act and from this it has produced a revised draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy that incorporates the requirements of both the Homelessness Reduction Act and the new code of guidance that takes effect in the early part of 2018.
- 4.7 The revised draft strategy (enclosed as Appendix Item Two) has benefitted from input by CRISIS operating as a critical friend, and is due to be considered by Cabinet in March of this year. The strategy's impact will be measured by four key statistical headline outputs, namely;
- 1) A reduction in the number of homeless acceptances by demonstrating a year on year reduction for the next three financial years set against the data outlined for 2016/17
 - 2) An increase in the number of homeless cases prevented from becoming homeless set against the data outlined for 2016/17
 - 3) A decrease in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation by demonstrating a year on year reduction for the next three financial years set against the data outlined for 2016/17
 - 4) To keep the level of rough sleeping below the England Rough Sleeping Rate (0.16per 1,000 households - excluding London)
- 4.8 From a Regional perspective, members of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Homelessness Taskforce have committed to work together to design out homelessness across the WMCA area. The intention is for the region to become an exemplar in implementing the

spirit and letter of the Act by coordinating system change, enhanced collaborative working, connecting mainstream strategies and facilitating a people centred approach. To date WMCA has received notification of securing £1.7m for a Housing First pilot to operate across the WMCA area and has also launched a alternative giving scheme and public information scheme – entitled *Change Into Action*.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 This is detailed in both the Delivery Plan and in part in section 4.5 above. A separate action plan has been formulated covering consultation and informing all stakeholders of the forthcoming impacts connected to the Act.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 There are no alternative options, the Council is required to comply with legislation.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Increased pressures will be placed on service budgets. This has been acknowledged by central government and as part of this the Council has received £464k New Burdens Funding over a three-year period. The Council is also continuing to look at ways of reducing service costs such as continuing to reduce Bed and Breakfast usage.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 9 From 3 April 2018, the Council will be required to comply with the Homelessness Reduction Act. To accompany the Act a revised Prevention of Homelessness Statutory Code of Guidance will be released in the early part of next year that will have to be complied with. Officers have received the current draft copy and are ensuring that all preparations are in compliance with the code.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 An equality impact will be completed as part of the Prevention of Homelessness Strategy review

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 The Council is considering using an additional I.T. system that is specifically tailored to the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act in preparation for its' implementation. Officers are currently working with the Information Management Unit to ensure that all data protection issues are covered should the Council take up this option.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 None required

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 12.1 The proposals outlined in the delivery plan are to enable the Council to comply with the requirements of the forthcoming Act. All actions will be met within current budget limits.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 13.1 The broad range of health inequalities brought about by homelessness in all its forms are well documented. If delivered successfully and the four key measures of the revised homelessness strategy are met then positive health and wellbeing determinants will also be achieved.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 14.1 None.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 15.1 The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act, which is due to be implemented on 3rd April 2018, represents a significant change to the way the Council will tackle homelessness in future. In summary, the Act places far greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness, early intervention and a responsibility on the part of those affected to take responsibilities to help resolve their homelessness.
- 15.2 The Act takes effect from 3 April 2018 and will significantly change the way in which the Council delivers its homelessness related services. Supported by a project board that meets weekly to monitor progress, a detailed Delivery Plan (attached as Appendix One) has been drawn up. The plan is enclosed as part of this report and covers:

- Strategic development
- Partnership working, joint protocols & resources
- Service realignment & channel shift
- Consultation, marketing & communication
- ICT & systems redesign
- Provision of accommodation
- Workforce development & channel shift
- Performance management and monitoring review

15.3 Under the 2002 Homelessness Act, local authorities are required to produce on a five-year cycle (as a minimum) a homelessness review and a Homelessness Strategy that sets out the strategic direction that the local authority will take to tackle homelessness. The Council has recently produced a Homelessness Needs Assessment as required by the Act and from this it has produced a revised draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy (attached as Appendix Two) that incorporates the requirements of both the Homelessness Reduction Act and the new code of guidance that takes effect in the early part of 2018

16 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

16.1 None

17 **APPENDICES:**

ONE: Homelessness Reduction Act Delivery Plan

TWO: Draft revised Prevention of Homelessness Strategy

Alan Caddick
Director – Housing and Communities

Appendix One: Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 Delivery Plan

Introduction

The Homelessness Reduction Act (referred to as ‘the Act’) is due to be introduced on 3rd April 2018 and represents the biggest change in Homelessness for over 15 years. It requires a significant shift in emphasis to early intervention and effective prevention. This will mean a whole Council approach to tackling homelessness and will involve a significant change in culture.

In order to achieve the ethos and spirit of the Act, this Delivery Plan outlines the key work streams and outcomes identified to ensure that a robust approach to homeless prevention is introduced. The Delivery Plan will be supported by a number of work plans. Each work stream will have a lead officer who will be responsible for the work plan for that area of work.

The Project Group will be responsible for the completion of the actions contained within the Delivery Plan and will meet weekly to oversee the progress of the Delivery Plan.

In addition, a Steering Group will be established to co-ordinate a whole Council approach along with partners to develop a holistic approach to homeless prevention

Our vision is for Sandwell to become a centre of excellence for the prevention of homelessness

Kevin Tebbett
Business Manager Housing Choice
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| Desired Outcome | Description of outcome / work stream | Key Milestones | Target Date |
|-----------------|--|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | <p>Strategic Development Develop a council wide strategic approach to the prevention of homelessness</p> | <p>Ensure Corporate commitment to the prevention of homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Ensure MPs & Members are briefed on the Homeless Reduction Act (ii) Dependent on above, deliver presentation to wider member group (iii) Undertake presentations to relevant colleagues within the Neighbourhoods Directorate and other relevant Directorates (iv) Undertake a review of the Homeless Strategy (v) Review the Allocations Policy to ensure that it supports the spirit / ethos of the Act | 31 st January 2018 |
| 2 | <p>Partnership Working Engage with Partners to develop a holistic approach to the prevention of homelessness with the relevant statutory and voluntary sector</p> | <p>Partners are actively engaged and are assisting with the prevention of homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Establish a clear understanding of the range of agencies / partners that can assist with the prevention of homelessness (ii) Promote the Act with partners, agencies, providers and Voluntary Sector (iii) Organise partner workshops events (iv) Establish links with Regeneration & DWP to develop employment opportunities for clients (v) Explore opportunities within the WMCA to prevent homelessness | 30 th April 2018 |

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| 3 | <p>Resources Plan for the use of new and current resources</p> | <p>All available resources have been identified and are used to support the implementation of the Act</p> <p>New Burdens Funding was announced on 16th October 2017 and is the second largest allocation in the West Midlands following Birmingham City Council</p> <p>Flexible Homeless Support Grant allocation has been awarded for 2017/18 & 2018/19.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Identify all appropriate funding sources for the implementation of the Act (ii) Complete funding application to the Controlling Migration Fund to develop approach with Brushstrokes (iii) Develop a resource plan to meet the additional duties of the Act | 31 st January 2018 |
| 4 | <p>Service Realignment Undertake a review of the current structure and realign the service to ensure it meets the requirement of the Homeless Reduction Act</p> | <p>The service has been redesigned to meet the principles of the Act and improves the customer journey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Undertake an assessment of the potential workload increase as a result of the new duties (ii) Complete a Prevention Pathway Gap analysis (iii) Work with the Housing Advisor to review the front line service (iv) Agree delivery model (v) Develop a structure that is fit for purpose (vi) Undertake a recruitment and selection exercise | 31 st March 2018 |

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| 5 | <p>Marketing & Communication Develop a robust marketing & communication plan to ensure employees, colleagues and partners are kept up to date</p> | <p>Ensure partners and employees are updated regularly on the Homeless Reduction Act</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Undertake a review of current communication channels (ii) Identify key messages to promote the service (iii) Develop a robust and effective marketing and Communication plan | 31 st January 2018 |
| 6 | <p>ICT Introduce an effective ICT solution that meets the requirements of the Act and delivers a lean approach that is fit for purpose</p> | <p>Develop improved ICT solutions to improve efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Undertake a review of the current IT homeless module (ii) Implement an effective Act Homelessness module (iii) Introduce the H-CLIC requirements | 28 th February 2018 |
| 7 | <p>Joint Protocols Review current protocols / pathways in place for vulnerable client groups</p> | <p>Develop Pathway plans / protocols for specific vulnerable groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Undertake a review of the range of current protocols and identify any gaps (ii) Undertake a review of the 16/17 Protocol (iii) Implement Vulnerable families Protocol (iv) Develop Care Leavers Protocol (v) Develop Hospital Discharge Protocol | 31 st March 2018 |

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| 8 | <p>Workforce Development The workforce has undertaken a robust training and development programme that delivers a cultural change that meets the spirit and ethos of the Act</p> | <p>A significant shift in culture has been achieved to meet the principles of the Act, which delivers a high quality, customer focussed homelessness service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Develop a workforce plan around behaviours and attitudes (ii) Investigate the opportunities to recruit apprentices (iii) Undertake a training needs analysis to support recent appraisal process (iv) Develop a comprehensive and robust training plan that delivers a fundamental shift in customer focused mindset / cultural change | 31 st March 2018 |
| 9 | <p>Systems Redesign Undertake a review of procedures and standard forms and letters to ensure they are free from jargon and are in plain English</p> | <p>Clear procedures are in place to ensure we are compliant with the requirements of the Act</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Review current ISO procedures and forms to ensure compliance with the Act (ii) Ensure all correspondence is in Plain English (iii) Review the information required for the initial interview (iv) Introduce Personal Housing Plans (v) Revisit review process | 28 th February 2018 |
| 10 | <p>Channel Shift Increase self help opportunities in line with the Channel Shift agenda</p> | <p>The Act will lead to an increase in approaches for advice and assistance and where appropriate customers will be able to access information on line or through fact sheets</p> <p>Review and implement a range of fact sheets that provide relevant housing advice Explore an on line self-assessment tool</p> | |

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| | | <p>Explore the use of forms that can be placed on line</p> <p>Review the use of video conferencing across the service</p> <p>Review the content of the Housing Choice website</p> | <p>28th February 2018</p> |
| 11 | <p>Consultation</p> <p>Review the approach to customer & employee engagement in the delivery of the service and measure satisfaction levels</p> | <p>Ensure partners , officers and customers are involved in the development of the service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Develop appropriate service standards with Tenants (ii) Introduce customer satisfaction surveys (iii) Establish a focus group for those tenants re-housed as a result of homelessness (iv) Establish Officer consultation group | <p>31st May 2018</p> |
| 12 | <p>Provision of accommodation</p> <p>Increase access to suitable accommodation to assist with the prevention of homelessness</p> | <p>Maximise the availability of suitable accommodation across all tenures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Introduce a revised Nominations Agreement with Register Providers (ii) Undertake a review of Age restricted accommodation (iii) Introduce a revised Tenants Assistance Scheme (iv) Increase access to Private Sector Accommodation (v) Explore the use of Supported Accommodation | <p>31st March 2018</p> |

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| 13 | <p>Performance Management Undertake a performance review in line with the requirements of the HRact</p> | <p>Ensure that relevant management information and performance indicators are established and monitored to assess the effectiveness of the new Act</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Review Key Performance Indicators to ensure they measure the required outcomes of the Act (ii) Identify the management information required (iii) Review collection of data and monitoring processes | 28 th February 2018 |
| 14 | <p>Monitoring & Review Review the progress with the implementation of the Act and revise the approach as necessary</p> | <p>Ensure that the service is meets the aims of the Act and continues to develop into a centre of excellence for the prevention of homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Develop a monthly monitoring process (ii) Undertake a six months review (iii) Explore opportunities for benchmarking with other Local Authorities opportunities (iv) Undertake a Value for Money review of the service | 31 st October 2018 |

Appendix Two:

DRAFT Homelessness Prevention Strategy

CONTENTS:

1. Forward
2. Introduction
3. Strategic aims and measuring outcomes
4. Defining Homelessness
5. Legal Duties
6. Summary overview of homelessness in Sandwell

Appendices

Appendix One: Strategic aims and respective outputs

FORWARD

TO BE FINALISED

CIlr Kerry Carmichael – Cabinet Member for Housing

DRAFT

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Every local authority has a statutory obligation to produce a strategic homelessness review and implement a strategic homelessness plan. The Council has completed its most recent strategic review this year.
- 2.2 Homelessness is caused by a complex interaction between a person or family's individual circumstances and a number of social and structural factors that are often outside of their own control. Unless these factors are addressed, the ability of an individual or family to become resilient and improve their chance of a positive future is greatly reduced and places them at risk of becoming trapped in a cycle of homelessness.
- 2.3 Tackling all of these factors at the point of crisis is complex and costly. Therefore more must do more to intervene as early as possible, to limit the impact of homelessness, to help people recover from homelessness, and prevent it from happening in the future. The delivery plan accompanying this strategy is a separate document and will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 2.4 The journey into and through homelessness is different for everyone. People enter at different stages, at different times in their lives, and each with individual support needs; it is important therefore to adopt a flexible approach to respond effectively.
- 2.5 Over the next few years, the challenges imposed by welfare reform together with the probability of rising housing costs will continue to place a significant number of Sandwell households into 'housing stress' at a time when service budgets remain under strain. Because of the pace of change in many of the dynamics that interface with homelessness, including the introduction of a revised Code of Guidance this strategy will be reviewed after three years.

3. STRATEGIC AIMS AND MEASURING OUTCOMES

- 3.1 Over the course of the last three years over 12k households approached the Housing Choice Service. With the help of our partner organisations approximately a third were enabled to

either stay in their existing home or were assisted to obtain suitable alternative accommodation before they hit crisis point.

3.2 Looking to the future, the Council will continue to pursue with vigour the 'prevention' agenda, with intervention taking place at the earliest point possible to prevent crisis. The Council has therefore adopted the following five aims to support people in Sandwell who are affected by homelessness:

1. **UNIVERSAL PREVENTION - to ensure people are well informed about their housing options.**
2. **TARGETED PREVENTION - to prevent people, particularly vulnerable people, from becoming homeless**
3. **CRISIS PREVENTION AND RELIEF - to assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing suitable accommodation and support**
4. **RECOVERY - to support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness**
5. **SUSTAINABLE HOUSING OPTIONS - to enable people to secure homes that they can afford and maintain**

These aims together with their respective outputs are detailed further in Appendix One.

3.3 Through its 2030 Vision, the Council has adopted ten Ambitions to make Sandwell a thriving, optimistic and resilient community. This strategy will play a role in this vision and in particular it supports Ambitions 2 and 5:

Ambition 2: Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live them for longer, and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.

Ambition 5: Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.

Measuring the outcomes of this strategy

3.4 The Council will measure the impact of this strategy by how well it achieves, or is on track to achieving, the following outcomes:

- A** A reduction in the number of homeless acceptances by demonstrating a year on year reduction for the next three financial years set against the data outlined for 2016/17 in *Figure One*.
- B** An increase in the number of households prevented from becoming homeless set against the data outlined for 2016/17 in *Figure Two*
- C** A decrease in the use of Bed and Breakfast/Hotels accommodation by demonstrating a year on year reduction for the next three financial years set against the data outlined for 2016/17 in *Figure Three*
- D** To keep the level of rough sleeping below the England Rough Sleeping Rate (0.16per 1,000 households - excluding London) as set out in *Figure Four*.

4. DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

4.1 Statutory Homelessness

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) defines statutory homelessness as:

“A household is legally homeless if, either, they do not have accommodation that they are entitled to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them or, they have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy this accommodation”

4.2 Street Homelessness (‘Rough Sleeping’)

DCLG define street homelessness as:

“People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters

or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes”)”

5. LEGAL DUTIES

5.1 The Council’s legal obligations with regard to homelessness are as follows:

- The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, Housing Act 1996, and the Homelessness Act 2002, places statutory duties on local housing authorities to ensure that advice and assistance to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness is free of charge. A ‘main homelessness duty’ is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. Where a main duty is owed, the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his or her household.
- The Homelessness Act 2002 places a specific requirement for local authorities to devise and implement a Homelessness Strategy.
- Commencing in April 2018 the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places further statutory duties on local authorities. The Act represents a fundamental change in the way that homeless services will be delivered by introducing three major new duties, namely:
 1. to **assess** all eligible applicants and agree an individual Personal Housing Plan
 2. to take reasonable steps to **prevent** homelessness
 3. to **relieve** homelessness by helping the applicant to secure accommodation.

The act also introduces responsibilities on the part of the applicant to take steps to either prevent or relieve their homelessness and is accompanied by a new statutory code.

6. OVERVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS IN SANDWELL

6.1 Over the last three years the number of approaches to the Housing Choice Service and subsequent cases opened has remained constant, with 4,163 opened in 2014/15, 4,200 in 2015/16 and 4,215 in 2016/17. This latter figure represents a 12% increase when compared to 2010/11. From cases opened covering the two financial years, the most common causes for approach to the service were:

- Parents/relatives no longer willing to accommodate (27%)
- Termination/loss of assured shorthold tenancy (AST) (20%)
- Relationship breakdown non-violent (11%)
- Relationship breakdown violence from partner (11%)
- Loss of National Asylum Seeker Support (NASS) (5%)

Overall, 74% of households presenting to the service did so under one of the five reasons outlined above.

Those owed the 'main duty'

6.2 In 2016/17 the Council helped 551 households who were eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Known as the 'main duty' or 'full statutory duty', the authority must ensure for these households that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his/her household. The most frequent cause of homelessness for people that the Council had a legal duty to rehouse was (in declining order):

1. Termination/loss of assured shorthold tenancy
2. Relationship breakdown – partner violent
3. Parents/relatives no longer willing to accommodate
4. Loss of National Asylum Seeker Support
5. Relationship breakdown partner non-violent

85% of households owed the 'main duty' present to the service under one of the five reasons outlined above. In addition, from

the 551 households owed the 'main duty', the presence of dependent children accounted for 68% (376) of the Priority Need award.

Figure One: Total number of cases accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need 2014/15 to 2016/17:

| | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
|---|----------------|----------------|--|
| Total Cases Full Duty Accepted | 565 | 546 | 551 |
| <i>Total cases opened</i> | 4163 | 4,220 | 4,215 |
| 2016 Homeless and in Priority Need acceptances Rate (per 1,000 households): | | | Sandwell: 4.52 England: 2.09* *excludes London |

Preventing people from becoming homeless

6.4 In 2016/17, 1,288 households were prevented from becoming homeless either by enabling them to remain in their existing home or finding suitable alternative accommodation.

Figure Two: Homeless Preventions by number 2014/15 to 2016/17:

| | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Assisted to remain in property | 1,105 | 703 | 697 |
| Assisted to obtain alternative accommodation | 638 | 450 | 591 |
| Total cases prevented from becoming homeless | 1,743 | 1,153 | 1,288 |
| <i>Total cases opened</i> | 4,163 | 4,220 | 4,215 |

Temporary Accommodation

- 6.5 Whilst the use of temporary accommodation (TA) remains an issue in the borough, the Council has in recent years considerably improved the options at its disposal where the use of TA is the only option. The Council can now utilize:
- 23 self contained units leased from Housing Options West Midlands
 - 6 bed HMO; leased from a Private Landlord
 - 6 x 2&3 bedroom flats within own stock
 - 7 bed HMO within own stock
 - 6 B&Bs used on a regular basis
 - A range of other B&Bs and hotels when the regular B&Bs are not available.

Figure Three below outlines by number TA usage by accommodation type and household type (number of persons). The data only includes households who were placed into TA for seven days or more.

Figure Two: Temporary Accommodation usage 2015/16 & 2016/17:

| Accom. Type | 2015/16 | | | | 2016/17 | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|----------------------|
| | Household Type | | | | Household Type | | | |
| | One person | Two persons | Three persons | Four or more persons | One person | Two persons | Three persons | Four or more persons |
| B&B or Hotel | 10 | 22 | 39 | 36 | 11 | 16 | 27 | 27 |
| Leased units | 7 | 9 | 21 | 19 | 8 | 15 | 25 | 37 |
| LA Accomm. | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 14 | 6 | 15 |
| <i>Total cases opened</i> | 4,224 | | | | 4,209 | | | |

Rough Sleeping

- 6.8 The Council's rough sleeper estimate completed in November 2016 (04/11) accounted for 11 people, up from 4 persons in 2016. In line with the national picture this represents a significant increase compared to the previous 2015 estimate of 4.

Figure Three: Sandwell Rough Sleeper Estimates by year/number 2012 to 2016:

| | Year (November) | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | <i>2012</i> | <i>2013</i> | <i>2014</i> | <i>2015</i> | <i>2016</i> |
| Number | 14 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 11 |
| 2016 Rough Sleeping Rate (per 1,000 households): | | Sandwell: 0.09 England: 0.16* <i>*excludes London</i> | | | |

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APPENDIX ONE:
AIMS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

AIM ONE: UNIVERSAL PREVENTION - to ensure people are well informed about their housing options.

This aim covers:

- Ensuring signposting outlets are readily accessible and are embedded beyond Council operated service areas covering the personal factors associated with homelessness:
 - Access to employment and benefits
 - Advice on housing costs and tenancy issues
 - Debt Advice
 - Mortgage and Repossession
 - Managing your tenancy
 - Neighbourhood Issues – ASB, Harassment, Environmental Services

Desired outcome:

People/families are empowered to understand about housing costs, options and know where to get help if they need it.

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AIM TWO: TARGETED PREVENTION - to prevent people, particularly vulnerable people, from becoming homeless

This aim covers:

Early intervention targeted to reach households most likely to be at risk of homelessness. Groups at risk of homelessness include:

- Those on low incomes and / or in debt
- Troubled Families
- Young offenders
- Those with mental health problems
- Those with drug and/or alcohol problems
- Ex-offenders
- Care Leavers
- Those experiencing domestic abuse
- Those experiencing bereavement

Desired outcome:

- **People/families are supported wherever possible and where it is appropriate to remain in their existing home**
- **People/families are supported where it is appropriate to make planned moves to reduce risk of homelessness and other harms**

AIM THREE: CRISIS PREVENTION AND RELIEF - to assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support

This aim covers:

- Integrated, co-ordinated response for accommodation and support for people / families where the threat of homelessness is imminent or they are homeless.
- Comprehensive multi-agency assessment of household need including housing, health, education or family mediation etc

Desired outcome:

- **Homelessness is prevented through intervention at point of crisis**
- **Emergency accommodation is secured for those without other housing options,**

AIM FOUR: RECOVERY - to support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness

This aim covers:

- Building resilience after the prevention or relief stage to stabilise and sustain accommodation focussing where appropriate on:
 - Accessing relevant support services, e.g. MH,
 - Maximising family income
 - Entering / maintaining employment and/or accessing education/ training.

Desired outcome:

- **Patterns of repeat homelessness are broken, individuals and families recover from their experience of homelessness and have the resilience to sustain accommodation and a more positive and healthy future.**

AIM FIVE: SUSTAINABLE HOUSING OPTIONS - to enable people to secure homes that they can afford and maintain

This aim covers:

- To ensure sufficient supply of suitable affordable housing options including access to the private rented, housing association and third sector accommodation;

Desired outcome:

There is a range of safe, decent, affordable housing options for all covering the private, social and third sectors.

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