

# **Report to the Housing Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 12 June 2018**

**Portfolio: Housing – Councillor S. Stavrou**

**Subject: Review of the Homelessness Strategy**

**Officer contact for further information:** Roger Wilson, extension 4419

**Committee Secretary:** Adrian Hendry, extension 4246

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## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**(1) That the Housing Select Committee considers the Draft Homelessness Strategy attached as an appendix to the report and passes on any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder;**

**(2) That a consultation exercise be undertaken for a period of 8 weeks with all Stakeholders with an interest in homelessness including Town and Parish Councils, with the outcome of the exercise and any proposed changes being reported to the Housing Portfolio Holder for consideration when adopting the revised Homelessness Strategy; and**

**(3) That the revised Homelessness Strategy becomes effective on 1 September 2018.**

## **Report:**

1. Under the Homelessness Act 2002, Local Authorities have a duty to review and publish their Homelessness Strategy on at least a 5 yearly basis. As this area of work regularly changes, it was agreed that the Council's Homelessness Strategy would be reviewed every three years. The Strategy links with the Council's Housing Strategy, Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Policy. The Strategy sets out achievements since 2015 and incorporates the needs and demands on the service and actions that need to be undertaken over the coming three years.

2. Importantly, following the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into force on 3 April 2018, some major changes have been made under this review. Although officers will explain in the detail at the meeting, the changes are briefly summarised as follows:

- The period that a person can be considered to be threatened with homelessness or it is likely that they will become homeless is extended from 28 days to 56 days
- An applicant is threatened with homelessness at the point the Section 21 Notice (which is the standard notice period provided by private landlords to tenants and is recognised as the single biggest cause of homelessness), has been served as opposed to at the end of the notice period, also preventing councils to advise applicants to remain in occupation beyond expiry
- Placing an emphasis on services preventing homelessness from occurring strengthening the duties on local authorities to provide advice, securing

- accommodation and other help available
- Ensuring services meet the needs of groups at particular risk to reflect their complex needs and vulnerabilities
- A duty to carry out an assessment of an applicant's case notifying the applicant of the assessment in writing and the provision of a Personalised Housing Plan in order to provide effective support
- The applicant's right to a Review of their Personalised Housing Plan
- The ending of the homelessness duty if the applicant "is unreasonably refusing to co-operate"
- The requirement to secure accommodation (under the new "Relief Duty") for at least 6 months for all applicants who the authority is satisfied are eligible for assistance
- The right to a Review of ending either the Prevention, Relief Duties or as a result of failing to co-operate

3. The Housing Select Committee is asked to consider the Draft Homelessness Strategy, which is included in the Panel's Work Programme, and is attached as an appendix, and report any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

4. A consultation exercise on the draft Homelessness Strategy will be undertaken over an 8 week period with all Stakeholders with an interest in homelessness including Town and Parish Councils. The Housing Portfolio Holder will be asked to consider the outcome of the exercise and any resultant changes and to adopt the revised Homelessness Strategy. The Strategy will take effect from 1 September 2018.

**Reason for decision:**

To consider the Council's draft Homelessness Strategy and report any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

**Options considered and rejected:**

Not to consider the draft Homelessness Strategy.

**Consultation undertaken:**

As set out in Paragraph 4 of the report.