

## SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report of:** The Portfolio Holder Housing and Health and the Executive Director Commercialisation (S151)

**To:** Cabinet – 13 February 2018

**Author:** Matthew Hogan, Strategic Housing Manager

**Subject** Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21

**Purpose:** To consider the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy for adoption

### **Recommendation:**

- 1) That the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 is adopted by South Holland District Council
- 2) In order to ensure that the strategy and the associated delivery plan remain relevant, that a full review of the data under-pinning the strategy is commenced within six months of adoption of the strategy.

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory duty upon local housing authorities to adopt a strategy setting out the approach that they will adopt in order to prevent and mitigate homelessness in their areas.
- 1.2 For many years, the seven district councils of Lincolnshire have worked collaboratively in order to fulfil this statutory duty. This collaboration has predominantly been achieved through the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy Group (LHSG). The group, which has existed for around fifteen years and consists of the lead housing officers for the seven districts, has a long standing history of collaborative working around homelessness. This includes joint working on funding bids to support the delivery of countywide projects, joint engagement with other key partners on shared issues relating to homelessness, and the production and delivery of a shared homelessness strategy.
- 1.3 The previous Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy ran from 2012 until 2016. During that period, the joint working through the LHSG achieved a number of notable outcomes, including;
  - Securing over £1m in government grant for countywide initiatives with links to homelessness, significantly supported by the seven districts being able to demonstrate to central government a shared agenda around homelessness prevention.
  - Utilising this funding, the LHSG took the lead on the commissioning of the first Lincolnshire-wide 'rough sleeper outreach service'; a service that has provided support to 1,395 individual rough sleepers across Lincolnshire since 2012.

- Working collaboratively, securing £430k in funding to support the provision of supported accommodation for victims of domestic abuse in Lincolnshire
- Working with Lincolnshire County Council to design a new model for housing-related support services across Lincolnshire; a model which went live in June 2016 and now provides supported accommodation for homeless households in every district of Lincolnshire (included 27 places in South Holland), alongside a countywide support service for those who require help to maintain their tenancy.
- Establishing a new protocol between Lincolnshire County Council Children Services teams and the seven districts in relating to youth homelessness, which has seen notable improvements in the support provided to young people who lose their accommodation.

1.4 Furthermore, during this period authorities in Lincolnshire has worked both individually and collaboratively to prevent the homelessness of in excess of 9,700 households. During 2016/17 South Holland District Council prevented the homelessness of 352 households, supported by the countywide initiatives put in place by the LHSG.

1.5 This report relates to the new Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21, which has been produced by the seven districts to cover the forthcoming four year period. The principle purpose of the Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 is to define the key matters of shared significance across the seven districts of Lincolnshire in relation to homelessness prevention over the coming four years, and to provide a basis from which new countywide initiatives can be pursued. The strategy is currently passing through all seven district councils and Lincolnshire County Council on route to adoption.

1.6 In summary, the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 is structured around the following priority areas;

- **Partnerships** - A need to developing and maintaining strong partnerships between the different agencies with links to homelessness, both at a strategic and an operational level. This is because effective homelessness prevention requires partners to work in collaboration, communicate effectively and share intelligence. The proposed approach to the delivery of the strategy (as set out in 1.8) sets out one of the many measures that the group overseeing the delivery of the strategy will pursue in order to strengthen partnerships in Lincolnshire.
- **Prevention** – The strategy reiterates the existing and long-held policy position of district councils in Lincolnshire that services and initiatives should focus on the prevention of homelessness, as opposed to focusing on dealing with homelessness once it has occurred.
- **Protecting vulnerable individuals, including rough sleepers** – The strategy has a focus upon the need to ensure that the most vulnerable individuals are protected from experiencing homelessness. This includes a focus on preventing people from falling into rough sleeping, and for ensuring support is in place for those already on the streets. The 'ACTion Lincs' project, highlighted in 1.9, will play a key role in delivering this priority.
- **Ensuring access to the right housing, including supported housing** – The strategy identifies a need to ensure that residents access the right type of housing that is suitable to meet their needs and their affordability. This is especially in relation to supported housing and 'move on' accommodation, which plays a critically important role in preventing and alleviating homelessness in Lincolnshire. A key

project for the early years of the strategy will focus around working with Lincolnshire County Council around their forthcoming review of supported housing services.

1.7 These priorities have been defined following analysis of the key national, countywide and local factors that are likely to have an impact upon homelessness in Lincolnshire over the coming four year period. These factors include the following;

- The increases in recorded homelessness and rough sleeping in Lincolnshire between 2012 and 2017, and the key drivers that sit behind this increase in homelessness. These drivers include a high number of households being evicted from the private rented sector, homelessness as a result of domestic abuse, and homelessness as a result of parental eviction.
- The forthcoming introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which represents a significant expansion in the duties placed upon local authorities in relation to the levels of support that they will be expected to provide to individual homeless households, and will reiterate the need to focus on homelessness prevention.
- The challenges posed by a continued under-supply of new affordable and supported housing in Lincolnshire, and the national policy picture that influences the supply of such housing.
- The continued government focus on welfare reform, and the challenges and opportunities that these reforms create for those at risk of homelessness
- Changes to national policy that may impact upon the continued supply of private rented accommodation in Lincolnshire; accommodation which plays an important role in meeting housing need and demand.
- The forthcoming plans of Lincolnshire County Council to review the housing-related support services that they currently fund; a review that the seven districts, working through the LHSG, will seek to play a key role in influencing and shaping.

1.8 The delivery of the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy will be facilitated through a revised governance and programme management structure for the LHSG. The details of this new approach to delivery of the strategy are set out below:

- **Delivery Plan.** The Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy will be supported by a 'live' delivery plan. The delivery plan will be focused around a small number of distinct countywide projects that will deliver the aims of the wider strategy. The delivery plan will continue to be reviewed throughout the lifespan of the strategy.
- **Homelessness Prevention Programme Manager.** Utilising government grant secured by the seven districts in 2017, a new programme manager has been appointed to oversee the delivery of the strategy. The programme manager will take ownership of developing and delivering the projects contained within the wider 'delivery plan'. They will also take ownership over seeking out new funding opportunities to deliver countywide programmes which will support the delivery of the strategy. The Homelessness Programme Manager will report to the LHSG. Amanda Pauling, who commenced in the role in November 2017, is employed by West Lindsey District Council to work on behalf of the entire LHSG in overseeing the delivery of the strategy.
- **Homelessness Prevention Strategy Network.** As a means of building the inter-partnership relationships required to deliver the strategy and better prevent homelessness across Lincolnshire, a Homelessness Strategy Network will be created. The group will consist of a wide network of voluntary and statutory sector

stakeholders, and will exist in order to increase collaboration, facilitate the sharing of intelligence, and build joint working around the delivery of the countywide strategy and associated delivery plan. The group will be chaired by the Homelessness Prevention Programme Manager. The group will meet on a quarterly basis.

- 1.9 Work is already underway to explore and/or deliver a number of key projects which will support the delivery of the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21. These projects include the 'ACTion Lincs' project. This is a Lincolnshire-wide project aimed at supporting a defined cohort of the 150 of the most vulnerable rough sleepers in Lincolnshire over a four year period. The project is the result of a £1.3m funding application made by the seven districts through the LHSG to the DCLG in late 2016. Officers at South Holland District Council played a leading role in driving the bid for funding for this project, given available evidence concerning the extent of rough sleeping in the district. This project went 'live' in September 2017, following a successful funding bid to the DCLG from the LHSG.
- 1.10 It should be noted that the data underpinning strategy relates to the 2016-17 period. In order to ensure that the strategy remains relevant, it is proposed that a review of the data underpinning the strategy is commenced within six months of adoption of the strategy (scheduled for Q3 2018/19). Such a review would be timely, given that from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2018 the national approach to collating data on homelessness is being revised to reflect the Homelessness Reduction Act (which is due to take effect from April 2018), and that the full suite of countywide data from the financial year 2017/18 will also become available during Summer 2018.
- 1.11 It is also worth noting that in addition to providing the basis for countywide joint working and initiatives in relation to homelessness, many of the key challenges identified in the strategy are also highly pertinent to projects and initiatives specific to South Holland. It is proposed that a separate action plan, setting out the local activity that the authority will undertake to deliver the strategy, will be developed throughout the course of 2018.

## 2.0 **OPTIONS**

- 2.1 **Adopt the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 (Recommended).** Under this recommendation, the authority will adopt the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21. Working through its membership of the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy Group, the council will work with its partners to deliver a programme of countywide activity aimed at reducing and mitigating homelessness. The adoption of the document also ensures that the Council continues to meet its statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to adopt a homelessness strategy.
- 2.2 **Do Nothing (Not Recommended).** Under this option, the authority will not adopt the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21. As the strategy is a shared document that underpins the existing working relationship between Lincolnshire district councils on homelessness, not adopting the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 would likely impact upon the council's continued involvement within the partnership that is the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy Group. The council would also need to explore other means of meeting its statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to adopt a homelessness strategy, most likely achieved through the creation and the adoption of a district specific document.

### 3.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

3.1 To adopt a revised strategy for the prevention of homelessness in Lincolnshire. To meet the council's statutory duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2002.

### 4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 The seven districts of Lincolnshire have a long and productive history around joint working on homelessness. This joint working has been underpinned by a shared strategy and a partnership group.

4.2 Looking forward, it is intended that a revised strategy and a new approach to governance around the delivery of the strategy will ensure that future joint working on homelessness in Lincolnshire remains as effective as it has been in the past.

4.3 One further benefit to be realised is that, in adopting the strategy, the council's statutory duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2002 would be met until 2021.

### 5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

#### 5.1 **Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues**

5.1.1 It is the opinion of the author that there are no such implications associated with this recommendation

#### 5.2 **Constitutional & Legal**

5.2.1 In adopting the strategy, the council's statutory duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2002 would be met until 2021.

5.2.2 This is not a policy falling within the Council's Policy Framework in Article 4 of the Constitution. As such, determination of the policy is a Cabinet function.

#### 5.3 **Contracts**

5.3.1 It is the opinion of the author that there are no such implications associated with this recommendation

#### 5.4 **Corporate Priorities**

5.4.1 There is a strong alignment between the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 and the delivery of the council's corporate priorities. This includes the council's priorities in relation to 'developing safer, stronger, healthier and more independent communities while protecting the most vulnerable'.

#### 5.5 **Crime and Disorder**

5.5.1 It is the opinion of the author that there are no such implications associated with this recommendation

## 5.6 **Equality and Diversity / Human Rights**

5.6.1 It is the opinion of the author that there are no such implications associated with this recommendation

## 5.7 **Financial**

5.7.1 It is the opinion of the author that there are no such implications associated with this recommendation

## 5.8 **Health & Wellbeing**

5.8.1 There is a strong alignment between the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 and the council's work around promoting the health and wellbeing of its residents, specifically in relation to the work relating to the prevention and alleviation of rough sleeping. It is intended that the delivery of the projects that underpin the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 will make a significant contribution to supporting the health and wellbeing of residents.

## 5.9 **Reputation**

5.9.1 It is the opinion of the author that there are no specific reputational implications associated with this recommendation, beyond the matter that the adoption the strategy will ensure that the council's statutory duties in relation to the Homelessness Act 2002 are met.

## 5.10 **Risk Management**

5.10.1 It is the opinion of the author that there are no specific risk management implications associated with this recommendation,

## 5.11 **Safeguarding**

5.11.1 It is the opinion of the author that there are no such implications associated with this recommendation

## 5.12 **Staffing**

5.12.1 It is the opinion of the author that there are no such implications associated with this recommendation

## 5.13 **Stakeholders / Constitution / Timescales**

5.13.1 There is no statutory requirement to publically consult on the development of a homelessness strategy. Despite this, the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 has been developed in conjunction with a number of key statutory and non-statutory partners, including homelessness charities, service providers, housing associations and 'blue light' services.

## 5.14 Transformation Programme

5.14.1 It is the opinion of the author that there are no such implications associated with this recommendation

## 6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 All wards

## 7.0 ACRONYMS

7.1 DCLG – Department for Communities and Local Government / LHSG – Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy Group

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Background papers:-

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### Lead Contact Officer

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**Key Decision:** Y

**Exempt Decision:** N

**This report refers to a Mandatory Service**

### Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21