


8th November 2016

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| Report of | Matthew Sterling Assistant Chief Executive | Author | Karen Paton  282275 |
| Title | Homelessness Strategy Progress report 2016 | | |
| Wards affected | All wards | | |

The Panel is invited to review The Homelessness Strategy Progress report 2016

1. Action required

- 1.1 The panel is asked to consider progress on implementing Colchester's Homelessness Strategy 2014-2019.

2. Reason for scrutiny

- 2.1 The panel is being asked to review the annual progress report and delivery plan 2015/2016 at the request of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Public Protection. The Panel are invited to comment and provide feedback on the progress made on the actions in the Homelessness Strategy Delivery Plan in the light of challenging national and local housing and welfare reform circumstances.

3. Background information

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities to carry out a homelessness review, develop a Homelessness Strategy for their area to prevent homelessness, and provide accommodation and/or support for people who are or may become homeless.
- 3.2 There are a significant number of single homeless people including those that are sleeping rough in Colchester that the Council does not owe a duty to house. This is because they are not in priority need as set out by Homelessness legislation.

Colchester Borough Council works in partnership with, and supports a number of voluntary sector organisations in Colchester that provide valuable advice, support and accommodation for the growing number of single homeless people.

- 3.3 Colchester's Homelessness Strategy 2014-19 was adopted in March 2014. The 5 year Strategy and Delivery Plan set out the way in which Colchester Borough Council and its partner organisations will work together to prevent homelessness in the borough.

Key Priorities were identified for the Homelessness Strategy:

1. Preventing homelessness by sustaining tenancies
2. Mitigating the negative impacts of welfare reform
3. Improving the Health and Wellbeing of homeless people
4. Changing the perception and culture of social housing through education – managing expectations
5. Rough Sleepers

4. Progress on delivering the Homelessness Strategy.

4.1 In order to monitor the Homelessness Strategy and Delivery plan it was agreed that a report on the progress of the actions would be produced on an annual basis and circulated to the relevant stakeholders.

4.2 A meeting was held in May 2016 with the Project Group that developed the strategy to reflect on the past year and some of the achievements that have been made in homelessness prevention across the borough. It was also an opportunity for organisations to share experiences and identify gaps and improve partnership working. The Project Group includes representatives from:

Colchester Borough Council
Colchester Borough Homes
Beacon House
Colchester Emergency Night Shelter
One Support
Supported Housing Providers including the YMCA and Family Mosaic
Colne Housing
Essex Probation
Homeless Link
The Job Centre Plus.

Following the meeting, the Delivery Plan was sent out to all the organisations that developed the strategy in order to capture all the progress that had been made towards the actions, since the strategy was written.

4.3 Some of the key actions that have been progressed include:

Action: *Provide advice and support to tenants/residents potentially affected by the welfare reforms.*

Progress:

- Colchester Borough Council has responded to the next stage of welfare reform by forming a specialist team to provide proactive intervention to support residents affected by various welfare reforms. The team will be based within Customer Services but will collaborate with various services across CBC and CBH and with external partners.
- Voluntary sector organisations in Colchester are also providing services to residents to help mitigate some of the impacts of welfare reform. (Details included in the Progress report).

Action: *Explore the possibility of extending the opening times of agencies to reduce the amount of time that rough sleepers spend on the street.*

Progress:

- Colchester Emergency Night Shelter now provide longer daytime opening hours to ensure that their service users are engaging with support. Clients who have been rehoused but were previously at the Night Shelter can benefit from the service. (50+ a week use the service).
- During the winter months, St Peters Guest House in conjunction with Beacon House provided shelter and food. The service was run by a paid Co-ordinator and volunteers. Between 14th December 2015 – end of February 2016 (Over 66 nights) the centre provided for 26 guests and received donations from local businesses.

- 4.3 The Homelessness Strategy Progress Report 2016 contains highlights of the actions that have been achieved or have moved forward in 2015-16. A copy of the progress report can be found at Appendix 1. A full copy of the Delivery Plan is shown at Appendix 2.
- 4.4 Key information from the Evidence base for both the Housing and Homelessness strategies has been combined into one document and includes recent data and identifies trends to support the strategies.

5. Strategic Plan references

The Homelessness Strategy links to the Council's Strategic Plan 2015-18 under the objective: Thriving - Be clear about the major opportunities to work in partnership with public, private and voluntary sectors to achieve more for Colchester than we could on our own

- 5.2 There is also a specific action to 'Work with statutory and voluntary sector partners to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough.'

6. Consultation

- 6.1 During the development of the Homelessness Strategy, consultation in the form of focus groups and questionnaires took place with service users.
- 6.2 Key stakeholders were consulted on all the Homelessness Strategy documents and continue to be involved in the delivery of the strategy.

7. Publicity considerations

The Homelessness Strategy documents including the progress reports are published on Colchester Borough Council's website. The Progress report and Delivery Plan 2015-16 will be circulated to all key stakeholders.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 Any resources required to implement the actions in the Homelessness Strategy is delivered from existing budgets. Partner organisations use the Homelessness Strategy to assist in aligning their financial resources to support the delivery of the actions in the Delivery Plan.
- 8.2 Colchester Borough Council receives an annual grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government to work with partner organisations to prevent homelessness in the borough. This is also used to help towards the implementation of some of the actions identified in the strategy.

9. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

An Equality Impact Assessment on the Homelessness Strategy has been completed and a link to the document can be found [here](#)

10. Community Safety implications

The implementation of the Homelessness Strategy Delivery Plan will be a positive benefit for Community Safety.

11. Health and Safety implications

There are no health and safety implications.

12. Risk Management implications

There are no risk management implications.

13. Other Standard References

There are no other standard references

Appendices

Appendix 1.Homelessness Strategy Progress report 2016

Appendix 2.Homelessness Strategy Delivery Plan 2015-16

Background papers

Housing and Homelessness Strategy Evidence Base 2015-16