

Adult, Community and Housing Services Scrutiny Committee 4th March 2014

Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services

Homeless Prevention Strategy Annual Refresh 2013

Purpose of Report

1. This report is to inform the Committee of the work undertaken to update the Homeless Prevention Strategy. This activity is carried out on an annual basis.

Background

2. The strategy and action plan has been developed in partnership with the multi-agency Homelessness Review Group. It has been subject to wider consultation via the Community Engagement Database. The document has been approved by the DACHS Senior Management Team and the Cabinet Member for Housing.
3. The majority of the data used to develop the strategy is taken from the Homelessness Annual Report 2012/13. The data relates to the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013.
4. The aim of the strategy is to prevent homelessness from occurring, where possible, by offering timely advice and assistance to households who are at risk of becoming homeless. The number of enquiries to the Dudley MBC Homeless Prevention and Response service has remained relatively stable over recent years at around 2,200 enquiries per year. Most households are provided with advice and assistance and/or take their own actions that prevents them from becoming homeless. During the 2012/13 financial year 171 households were accepted as full duty homeless¹ which is an increase from 158 in the previous year. The most frequent cause of homelessness within the Borough was the termination of assured shorthold tenancy (private rented sector).
5. The strategy will impact on the following corporate issues:
 - Human Rights – The right to enjoy your property peacefully
 - Asset Management – to make the best use of housing stock and return empty homes to use
 - Crime and Disorder – to reduce rough sleeping and any associated anti-social behaviour/fear of crime
 - Health Implications/Inequalities – people who are homeless are at greater risk of health issues and are less likely to be able to access health services
 - Environmental Impact and Sustainability – good quality, affordable homes help to provide a good environment where people want to live

¹ Under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996

- *Neighbourhood Management – by preventing homelessness and providing good quality housing there can be less ‘churn’ in neighbourhoods – empty homes/tenancy failure/abandoned properties*

Finance

6. The majority of the functions will be delivered by utilising the existing budgets and resources of the organisations identified within the action plan. This position will be reviewed annually in line with the budgets that are set. One action that had been identified in the action plan was reliant upon a successful grant funding application (dealing with Rogue Landlords – Department for Communities and Local Government). We have subsequently been informed that this bid was unsuccessful so other opportunities will be explored to try to achieve this objective.

Law

7. The Council's powers and duties relating to homelessness are contained within the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002 and the Council may do anything incidental to, conducive to, or which facilitates the discharge of its functions under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Equality Impact

8. An Equality Impact Assessment has been produced in relation to this strategy.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that:-
 - The contents of the Strategy are noted by the Scrutiny Committee.



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List of Background Papers



Homelessness
Prevention Strategy



EIA Homelessness
Prevention Strategy