

REPORT TO CABINET
20th November 2018

SUBJECT: GWENT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY (DRAFT) 2018 – 2022 and HOMELESSNESS REVIEWS

Report Submitted by: Keith Rutherford, Chief Officer Social Care & Housing
Report Written by: Elke Winton, Group Manager Housing

1. Area Affected

1.1 The borough of Torfaen and the wider Gwent region.

2. Purpose of Report

2.1 To update Cabinet on the development of the draft Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018 – 2022 and Homelessness Reviews.

2.2 To seek Cabinet approval of the draft Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018 – 2022.

3. Key Messages

- 3.1
- Since the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, local authorities in Wales have a statutory duty to carry out a local homelessness review and formulate a homelessness strategy.
 - Welsh Government require homelessness reviews and strategies to be in place by the end of December 2018, and to be repeated periodically every 4 years.
 - Guidance on the development and formulation of the homelessness reviews and strategies can be found in following linked web page: [Welsh Government Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness March 2016](#)
 - Within the guidance ‘Local Authorities are encouraged to plan homelessness services regionally where appropriate’.
 - The local authorities in Gwent agreed to collaborate on the development of a regional strategy and combined reviews, in order to transcend geographical boundaries, cater for transience and maximise joint working opportunities.
 - Considerable stakeholder consultation, engagement and intelligence gathering has been undertaken to inform the Gwent Homelessness Strategy and Reviews.

4. Background

4.1 The introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 placed a statutory duty on all local authorities in Wales to carry out a local homelessness review and formulate a homelessness strategy.

4.2 As a result of this legislation, Welsh Government (WG) issued a ‘Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness’. Chapter 5 of this guidance provides more detailed information

about the planning of homelessness services under Sections 50 to 52 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The Guidance goes on to state that:

The intention of this part of the legislation is to ensure that Local Authorities work systematically with partners to assess the nature and extent of homelessness in their areas and to plan service provision to prevent and relieve homelessness.

4.3 Section 50 of the Code of Guidance states that local authorities must carry out a homelessness review of its areas and formulate and adopt a homelessness strategy to be in place by 31st December 2018. Section 50 goes on to state that a new homelessness strategy must be adopted in every fourth year after 2018.

5. Formulation of the Homeless Strategy and Reviews

5.1 The Torfaen Housing Service has a history of positive and productive partnership working with its neighbouring housing authorities in the Gwent area. In recognition of this, and alongside the understanding that service users do not merely reside, present or need support and accommodation within single county boundaries, the five local authorities, (Torfaen County Borough Council, Newport City Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council) agreed to collectively pool knowledge and resources to develop the local reviews and a regional homelessness strategy.

5.2 Through dialogue with Welsh Government Officers, it was agreed that five local reviews would be undertaken (as per the Act requirements), but these separate reviews would be merged, also informing a single regional homelessness strategy.

5.3 By working collaboratively it was felt that a number of opportunities exist:

- to better understand homelessness across the region and enable local comparisons
- to more comprehensively consider service user needs, the supply of services and resources available alongside variances/inconsistencies across the region
- to afford a greater ability to factor in service user transience and migration
- to identify/share pockets of good practice and further partnership working opportunities

5.4 Development of the Gwent Homelessness Strategy and Reviews was overseen by a Gwent Homelessness Strategy Group with representatives from each local authority. TCBC acted as the lead authority and host for the jointly funded Regional Research Officer seconded for a seven month period to undertake the in-depth work across all localities.

5.5 Development took place over 5 key phases, broadly ranging from undertaking desktop research, data and trend analysis, service user and stakeholder interviews and surveys, a regional engagement event, SWOT /PESTL analysis and the formulation of strategic objectives to inform a one page Gwent Homelessness Strategy.

- 5.6 The Gwent Homelessness Reviews can be found as **Appendix 1** to this report. 25 key themes were identified and consulted upon with stakeholders.
- 5.7 The draft Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018 – 2022 can be found as **Appendix 2** to this report. The Strategy is broken down into 4 priority areas:
1. Help improve access to suitable and affordable housing
 2. Offer fast and effective advice and support, working with partners to help vulnerable people
 3. Minimise homelessness and prevent it through early intervention
 4. Ensure fair, equal and person-centred homeless services
- 5.8 The Strategy also highlights 10 strategic objectives. These have been combined into a single Gwent Homelessness Regional Action Plan with activities under each header objective. Local actions plans are also in place to take forward actions that do not add value or identify on a regional basis.
- 5.9 The Gwent Homelessness Strategy Group will continue to meet to oversee progress against the Regional Action Plan and local actions as appropriate.
- 5.10 The Torfaen Strategic Housing Forum and Supporting People Local Planning Group will be utilised to monitor progress against the Torfaen Local Action Plan and regional actions as appropriate.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Extensive consultation and engagement has taken place including:
- 218 service users who have used Gwent homelessness services
 - 140 delegates attending the Gwent Homelessness Strategy event, representing a wide range of organisations across the region
 - Welsh Government Housing Directorate
 - Welsh Local Government Association
 - Tai Pawb
 - Shelter Cymru
 - Cymorth Cymru
 - Gwent Housing / Homelessness Teams
 - Gwent Supporting People Regional Collaborative Committee
 - Gwent Registered Social Landlords
 - Torfaen Safer Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee
 - Cabinet Member for Communities, Housing & Anti-Poverty
 - Torfaen Elected Members
 - Torfaen Social Care & Housing Senior Management Team
 - Torfaen Resources Service
 - Torfaen Equalities Lead
- 6.2 Consultation with the Safer Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 26th September 2018 produced 9 recommendations. These recommendations have subsequently been accepted for implementation by the Cabinet Member for Communities, Housing & Anti-Poverty and are factored into the Regional and Local Action Plans.

7. Well-being Assessment

- 7.1 A Well-being Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as **Appendix 3**.
- 7.2 The Well-Being Assessment illustrates how the draft Gwent Homelessness Strategy for Torfaen is able to embrace the 5 ways of working – integration, long-term, prevention, collaboration and involvement. The Strategy co-ordinates involvement from partners on a collaborative basis and homelessness, housing and support services will be better aligned to operate at a more integrated level. The longer-term benefits of undertaking in-depth homelessness reviews and having a cross county strategic approach to delivering services and products that prevent or relieve homelessness is fully embraced. This needs to be monitored closely through the Regional and Local Action Plans. Further strategy development prior to the end of the four year period will need further consideration.
- 7.3 Delivery of the Gwent Homelessness Strategy will be in accordance with the Welsh Language Measure (2011), the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations (2011) and the Environment (Wales) Act (2016), and will be monitored by the Gwent Homelessness Strategy Group and Torfaen Strategic Housing Forum and Supporting People Local Planning Group.
- 7.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment of the Strategy has also been undertaken by Caerphilly County Borough Council. The Assessment has been agreed by the Gwent Homelessness Strategy Group.

8. Risks

- 8.1 Without undertaking a comprehensive review of homelessness and adopting a homelessness strategy renders Torfaen County Borough Council non-compliant with statutory obligations associated with the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- 8.2 Similarly, not taking up the opportunity to focus efforts and valuable resources in a more coordinated, streamlined and strategically planned manner could negate the ability to ensure economy, efficiency, efficacy and equality is maximised for vulnerable homeless and at risk of homelessness households across the borough and the Gwent region.

9. Action to be taken following decision

- 9.1 Following approval by Cabinet, the Strategy will be amended into a final version to be circulated across the borough (and Gwent).
- 9.2 Progress of the Gwent Homelessness Strategy will be monitored by the Gwent Homelessness Strategy Group, the Torfaen Strategic Housing Forum and Supporting People Local Planning Group via the Regional and Local Action Plans.
- 9.3 Each respective Gwent local authority is seeking formal approval.

Development of a next homelessness review and strategy will be scheduled to

9.4 commence during 2022.

10. Measures of Success

10.1 The Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018 – 2022 contributes to all three of the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities namely by:

- supporting Torfaen's most vulnerable residents – homeless households or those at risk of homelessness will receive improved homelessness, support and housing services that help reduce their vulnerability
- raising educational attainment – homeless or at risk of homelessness will have improved access to affordable housing and support to help provide a stable base for accessing and sustaining education, training and employment.
- and a clean and green Torfaen.- homeless households or those at risk of homelessness will have improved access to suitable affordable housing in positive environments

11. Conclusion/summary

11.1 All local authorities in Wales are required to undertake a homelessness review and adopt a homelessness strategy by December 31st 2018.

11.2 Through considerable consultation and research, Torfaen CBC and the neighbouring Gwent local authorities have successfully developed joint reviews and a shared Gwent Homelessness Strategy with a vision and mission for overcoming homelessness across the region.

11.3 Success of the Strategy will be monitored by progress recorded against the Regional and Local Action Plans.

12. Recommendation(s)

12.1 That Cabinet review the draft Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018 – 2022 and Reviews.

12.2 That Cabinet approves the draft Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 2022.

Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gwent Homelessness Reviews 20182. Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018 – 20223. Well-Being Assessment
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Papers	Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (Welsh Government) Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales 2009 (Welsh Government) Code of Guidance to Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2016 (Welsh Government)
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	Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 Torfaen County Borough Council Corporate Plan 3 Caerphilly County Borough Council Equalities Impact Assessment
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For a copy of the background papers or for further information about this report, please telephone: Elke Winton, Group Manager Housing. Telephone: 01495 766174
Email: Elke.Winton@torfaen.gov.uk