

## THE EXECUTIVE

8th JULY 2003

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING & HEALTH

<b>DRAFT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY</b>	<b>FOR DECISION</b>	
<p><i>This report concerns issues affecting the Council's discharge of statutory duties to homeless people and the requirement to produce a Homelessness Strategy.</i></p> <p><b><u>Summary</u></b></p> <p>The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that local housing authorities conduct a review of homelessness in their areas and develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy. This report sets out briefly how this was conducted. The draft Homelessness Strategy is appended to the report for consideration.</p> <p>Further consultation on the draft will be required before the Homelessness Strategy is adopted by the Council. The Barking &amp; Dagenham Partnership Housing Group, which has been consulted on the draft, will be involved in the monitoring of the implementation of the action plan included in the strategy. The report also deals with the revenue resource implications of the strategy and indicates that these can be contained within existing expenditure levels.</p> <p><b><u>Recommendations</u></b></p> <p>The Executive is asked to agree:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The draft Homelessness Strategy for further consultation; and</li><li>2. To receive the final version of the Homelessness Strategy for adoption following completion of the consultation process.</li></ol> <p><b><u>Reason</u></b></p> <p>There is a statutory requirement from the Homelessness Act 2002 for the Council to review homelessness and trends within the borough and produce a Homelessness Strategy by the end of July 2003.</p>		
<b>Contact:</b> Ken Jones	Interim Head of Housing Strategy.	Tel: 020 8227 5703 Fax: 020 8227 5799 Minicom: 020 8227 5755 E-mail: <a href="mailto:ken.jones@lbbd.gov.uk">ken.jones@lbbd.gov.uk</a>

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 set a requirement for local housing authorities to conduct a review of homelessness within their areas. This review must look at trends and consider differential impacts on specific groups within the community. Flowing from the review, a Homelessness Strategy is to be produced by the end of July 2003. The ODPM gave practical guidelines on how these should be conducted and that the strategy must link with to Community Strategy, Housing Strategy and all relevant corporate programmes. The Executive agreed on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2002 to set up a group with these tasks.

## **2. Homelessness Strategy Working Group**

- 2.1 The group has involved the bodies in Appendix A. A homelessness review was conducted which considered trends, the incidence of homelessness within specific groups in the community and mapping of homelessness service providers, gaps in services and any overlaps in provision.
- 2.2 A consultation event was held in January 2003 involving service providers and other stakeholders including the voluntary sector. Service users views have been assessed via surveys.
- 2.3 The draft Homelessness Strategy has been produced, Appendix B, in accordance with ODPM guidance and emerging best practice. Whilst it reflects national and regional demands and influences it is set in the borough context with clear relationships to other corporate strategies, in particular the Council's Housing Strategy and the Community Strategy.
- 2.4 The vision frames a value base for dealing with homelessness and gives an objective of homelessness being prevented wherever possible. The broad aims are to:
- Prevent homelessness.
  - Alleviate homelessness and prevent social exclusion for those who experience it.
  - Eliminate bed & breakfast use for families with children by 2004.
  - Secure joint work and service delivery to provide user needs led services and support.
- 2.5 Implementation of the Strategy action plan will be monitored by the Barking & Dagenham Partnership Housing Group.

## **3. Resource Implications**

- 3.1 Actions are in place that will reduce the usage of bed & breakfast. In particular:
- 2 new RSL hostels with 71 units are due for completion in October 2004. ODPM have indicated that revenue support costs will be eligible for Supporting People Grant.
  - There are 91 private sector properties in the borough leased for temporary accommodation, with plans to take this up to 200 to meet temporary housing needs.

- The Housing Strategy targets bringing back into use 10% of empty private homes a year.
- Foyer - for 116 young people - start on site is set for January 2004, dependent on a successful bid for Local Authority Social Housing Grant to meet capital costs and Supporting People Grant.

3.2 Initiatives have been made and resourced to enhance homelessness prevention:-

- The Accommodation Resettlement Unit has been established a major part of whose purpose is to prevent repeat homelessness.
- The partnership working with the Leaving Care Team has cut tenancy failure of young people leaving Council care.
- External mediation services are now used when homeless approaches are received from people who have been ejected by families.

3.3 It is not proposed to seek additional revenue resources for this service. The Council has succeeded in securing grant from the ODPM Homelessness Directorate in response to bids on homelessness prevention (mediation) and private sector leasing / rent deposit initiatives.

3.4 Council spending on B&B:

2001/02 - £117,255

2002/03 - £664,076 (£428,012 net of Housing Benefit).

The initiatives in 3.1 will cut B&B usage to meet the target of no family placements from April 2004. Proposals may be made later to strengthen the Housing Advice Service to raise homelessness prevention, but this would be financed from B&B spending savings.

#### **4. Further Consultation**

4.1 It is proposed to consult on the draft Strategy following Executive approval. It will be circulated to all participants in the process. These actions will be taken to extend consultation:

- Draft strategy on Council website
- ALG Homelessness and BME sub groups
- LSP Housing Group
- Homelessness Directorate ODPM
- Private sector landlord forum
- Shelter

4.2 Following final consultation and collation of feedback, a report will brought back to the Executive for adoption of the Homelessness Strategy.

#### **Background papers used in the preparation of this report:**

Report to the Executive 30/7/01

## **Appendix A**

Organisations and Council Departments involved in the Homelessness Strategy Working Group:-

Dagenham Citizens Advice Bureau

EMPA

Probation Service

East Street Youth Information

Connexions

Community Mental Health

Supporting People

Axe Street Drug Project

Social Services Children's Services

HACAS Chapman Hendy

Housing & Health

Corporate Policy & Performance