

# **APPENDIX L**

## **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 16 JUNE 2008**

#### **EXECUTIVE - 8 JULY 2008**

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#### **Title:**

**A PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY FOR WAVERLEY 2008-2013**

**[Portfolio Holder for Housing: Cllr R J Gates]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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#### **Summary and purpose:**

It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy at least every 5 years. The draft 'Prevention of Homelessness Strategy for Waverley' outlines the steps the Council and its partners will take to tackle homelessness over the next 5 years.

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#### **Environmental implications:**

The provision of homes can impact both positively and negatively on the environment and achieving a sensitive balance between the needs of people and the environment can be very challenging.

#### **Social / community implications:**

Having a suitable home is a fundamental requirement for people to be able to be safe, healthy and included in society.

#### **E-Government implications:**

E-Government can help customers to access housing options advice information and services and the strategy outlines what could be done to use information technology further.

#### **Resource and legal implications:**

Producing a Homelessness Strategy every five years is a legal requirement and the Strategy has been produced following consultation and co-operation with both statutory and voluntary agencies.

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#### **Background**

1. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that Local Authorities produce a Homelessness Strategy every 5 years. Waverley's last Strategy was published in July 2003.

2. The Strategy should be the result of partnership working and in particular should involve liaison with Social Services. It should include a review of the current levels of homelessness in Waverley and the services and accommodation available to meet the needs of those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
3. It should also take into account Government priorities in term of tackling homelessness as well as link in with the Council's own Strategies and the Strategies of its partner agencies.
4. Officers are still consulting with customers and stakeholders in regard to the content of the attached draft Strategy so there are likely to be a few amendments prior to the Strategy being submitted to the Executive and full Council for approval.

### **Progress since the last Strategy**

5. The Strategy highlights the progress the Council and its partners have made in tackling homelessness by adopting a proactive, preventative approach – known as a Housing Options approach.
6. This means that resources are targeted at preventative housing advice and measures such as mediation and negotiation, to help people remain in suitable accommodation.
7. Where prevention is not appropriate or achievable, the Council has worked very hard at helping people access alternative housing options such as accommodation in the private sector or supported accommodation.
8. This new approach has meant that the number of households formally applying as homeless to the Council and being accepted as homeless has dropped considerably. This in turn has meant the Council has already met the Government's 2010 target of reducing the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation by 50%.
9. This success has delivered financial benefits to the Waverley in that the Council has been able to reduce its portfolio of privately leased properties from around 50 properties in 2004 to 5 in March 2008.
10. The Strategy stresses, however, that the Council and its partners have by no means eliminated homelessness in Waverley. The numbers of people approaching the Council for help in regard to their housing and the threat of homelessness is in fact increasing. What has changed is how the Council is actually dealing with these cases.

### **Prevention of Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013**

11. The Strategy outlines the areas for improvement and gaps in provision highlighted by the Homelessness Review that forms Annexe 1 of the Strategy. The Homelessness Review is available as a separate document in the members' room and will be placed on the Council's website.

12. A key part of the Homelessness Review was customer and stakeholder consultation. From the review 4 key priorities dominate:
- The need to improve multi agency working to prevent homelessness
  - The need for increased supply of affordable and supported housing
  - The need to build on and improve the work of the housing options service
  - The need for increased support and assistance for vulnerable and hard to reach groups.
13. The Strategy includes an Action Plan to help the Council and its partners monitor and achieve these priorities.

### **Conclusion**

14. Whilst the Council and its partners have made excellent progress in tackling homelessness in Waverley there is still much to be done. The anticipated economic slow down and the 'credit crunch' is likely to increase the demands on the Council's and its partner's services. The Council's Prevention of Homelessness Strategy seeks to build on the excellent progress to date.
15. The Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and endorsed this report at its meeting on 16 June 2008.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Prevention of Homelessness Strategy for Waverley be recommended to the Council for adoption.

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### **Background Papers (SD(CS))**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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