

Scrutiny Committee – 5 November 2013

10. Countywide Homeless Strategy and Action Plan

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Purpose of the report

To present the Countywide Homeless Strategy and Action Plan following considerable development work from members of the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish group. *Please note that the draft strategy will be circulated separately with the District Executive agenda (for the meeting to be held on 7 November)*

Action required

Scrutiny Committee consider the revised Draft Countywide Homeless Strategy, noting the positive feedback from the partner authorities, and recommend the strategy to District Executive.

Report

Scrutiny Committee agreed earlier this year that the best way to consider the revised Countywide Homeless Strategy was to set up a Task and Finish group that could work in collaboration with representatives from the other Somerset authorities to ensure the strategy:

- Provides a clear vision that will work for each authority
- Strives to make the most of all the Councils having a common approach.
- Is suitably ambitious
- Clearly identifies appropriate actions and responsible parties to effectively deliver what is required over the term of the strategy.

Task and Finish Group members: Carol Goodall, Graham Middleton, David Norris, Sue Steele, Colin Winder and Derek Yeomans

The group agreed to aid and assist the policy development process and collectively set out the following ambitions:

To ensure the strategy:

- Is well informed (based on relevant and up to date evidence)
- Is accessible, uses plain English.
- Is both realistic and ambitious
- Will work in harmony with other existing policy and strategy for South Somerset and the Council Plan.
- Seeks to build on the strengths of the partners
- Has an appropriate Action Plan to realise the Aims within the Strategy
- Has given due regard to equalities
- Addresses each authority's individual needs while looking to share knowledge, expertise and skill to deliver good practice and effective solutions.

The group met on four occasions and with help and advice from Kirsty Larkins – Housing and Welfare Manager made the following recommendations to the Homeless Managers across the County:

- Re-organise the document so that it is succinct and tells a story, separating the supporting evidence for the rationale of the Strategy
- Remove duplication across the different aims and the supporting text, reducing the overall number of ambitions
- To simplify the English, making it more user friendly and accessible to those without Housing expertise
- Explain any technical terms in a glossary
- Only provide up-to-date and relevant statistics - replace some of the national statistics with local countywide statistics and reduce the period some of tables and graphs were illustrating.
- To use the same key for each graph so it is easier to identify each authority in isolation throughout the strategy

The group provided examples and suggestions for each of the recommendations.

The group met on one more occasion to discuss the outcome of the recommendations, and circulated the draft Countywide Homeless Strategy to all Scrutiny Committees across Somerset for feedback; to date the following feedback has been provided:

Authority	Progress to date
Mendip District Council	Strategy has been approved by Scrutiny and Cabinet – no amendments requested.
Sedgemoor District Council	Noted at Corporate Scrutiny on 9 th September approved at Executive 2 nd October – no amendments requested.
Taunton Deane Borough Council	Noted at Community Scrutiny on 3 rd of September and recommended: With a view to finalising the strategy as soon as possible, it be agreed that the final approval of the Somerset Homeless Strategy be determined by the Executive Councillor for Housing.
West Somerset District Council	On 3 rd October the Housing Policy Advisory Group was happy with the strategy and feel that it is appropriate for the needs of West Somerset. They found the depth and the content of the EIA useful in their consideration of the strategy and thought the action plan to be focused and appropriate to deliver on the goals. They did not put forward any recommendations for further amendment.