

To: Cabinet Member, Councillor J Phillips

From: Mike Parker  
Director of Economic Prosperity and Place  
Ext. 2500

13<sup>th</sup> March 2012

## **Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The report presents the Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 for comment and seeks approval for the draft to be agreed for the final 12 week consultation.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

**The Cabinet Member is asked to DECIDE that:**

- 2.1 **The Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 be agreed for 12 week public consultation from 16<sup>th</sup> March 2012.**
- 2.2 **Following the 12 week consultation, that delegated powers be given to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place-Shaping to approve the final version of the Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy.**

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all Local Authorities to publish a homelessness strategy and it is published in accordance with the 2007 Code of Guidance on Homelessness Strategies. The legislation prescribes that prior to the Homelessness Strategy being written, a review into the nature and extent of homelessness in the local authority area is required.
- 3.2 The review document, which informs the strategy, includes information on:
- The nature and extent of homelessness across the county.
  - A profile of those who have experienced homelessness including data on the most vulnerable homeless groups.
  - Factors that will have an impact on future levels of homelessness in the county.
  - Information on support, accommodation and resources available.
  - Outcomes from the previous strategy.
  - Analysis of consultation undertaken.
- 3.3 The main finding of the review was that since 2007, the Worcestershire Authorities have been successful in preventing homelessness and this acceptance being made by the local authorities. However, data from 2011 shows that the level of acceptances is now increasing. Whilst this is line with the national situation, particular issues that are impacting upon the Worcestershire authorities include exclusion from parents/friends homes, the loss of assured short hold tenancies and

relationship breakdown (violent and non violent). It is thought that pressures such as the economic downturn and future legislative changes such as the Welfare Benefit Reforms that are causing an increase and this is expected to continue to have an impact. Therefore, against this context the 2012-2016 strategy identifies the priority areas for action in order to tackle homelessness in the County.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES**

4.1 The 2012 strategy builds upon the achievements of the 2007 -2011 strategy and aims to tackle the particular issues identified in the review document.

4.2 The homelessness strategy has four overarching goals and these are:

- Providing a pathway to a housing solution for everyone that accesses our services.
- Creating strong partnerships to tackle homelessness.
- Taking effective action to prevent anyone new to the streets, having to sleep out for more than one night.
- Tackling financial deprivation of those affected by benefit reform, welfare reform and worklessness.

4.3 Under the four goals, the strategy aims to continue the reduction in homelessness presentation through prevention work. However, the 2012 strategy has a greater emphasis upon tackling homelessness amongst all people presenting, whether local authorities have a duty or not. This is in line with the national government agenda of 'No Second Night Out'.

4.4 However, the challenge that local authorities face in tackling homelessness, at a time when the public sector faces budget reductions and homelessness is on the increase, is not underestimated. Therefore, the strategy also emphasises the need to develop stronger, more efficient and effective relationships with a range of organisations across public, voluntary and private sectors.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no immediate financial implications to the Council associated with the approval of the Countywide Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan as the implementation of these actions will be carried out within existing Strategic Housing team resources. Where actions within the action plan are set to assess or investigate the potential implementation of certain new services and local funding would be required, a bid would have to be submitted for consideration under the Council's corporate annual budget process.

#### **6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all Local Authorities to publish a homelessness strategy and it is published in accordance with the 2007 Code of Guidance on Homelessness Strategies.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed. There are no negative impacts identified.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 The delivery of a homelessness strategy is a statutory function and therefore non delivery would mean that Wyre Forest District Council would be in breach of its duties under the Homelessness Act (2002).

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy sets out the strategic direction of homelessness service delivery in the County between 2012-16. Members have been asked to approve the release of the draft strategy for public consultation and to approve delegated powers to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place Shaping to approve the finalised strategy following the period of consultation.

## **10. CONSULTEES**

- 10.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
10.2 Corporate Management Team  
10.3 Director Localism

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Worcestershire Homelessness Review 2011.  
11.2 Overview and Scrutiny Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy Report 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

**NOTICE OF DELEGATION OF DECISION TO CABINET MEMBER BY STRONG LEADER**

Section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 2000, the senior executive member may discharge any of the functions that are the responsibility of the Cabinet or may arrange for them to be discharged by another member of the Cabinet or Officer. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010, the Council adopted the Strong Leader Model for Corporate Governance 2011 as required under Part 3 of The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (The 2007 Act).

I, J-P Champion, as Strong Leader, delegate the decision to approve that the draft Worcestershire Homeless Strategy goes out to consultation as detailed in the Forward Plan to the Cabinet Member/Officer detailed below and that the final version is agreed by the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Place Shaping.

Cabinet Member/Officer ... Councillor Julian Phillips

Dated:

9<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

Signed:



Leader of the Council

**NOTICE OF DECISION OF CABINET MEMBER**

Pursuant Section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 2000, as amended by section 63 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the senior executive member may discharge any of the functions that are the responsibility of the Cabinet or may arrange for them to be discharged by another member of the Cabinet or Officer. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010, the Council adopted the Strong Leader Model for Corporate Governance 2011 as required under Part 3 of The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (The 2007 Act).

In accordance with the authority delegated to me by the Leader, I have made the following decision:

Subject	Decision	Reason for decision	Date for Decision to be taken
Worcestershire Homeless Strategy	To agree the Homeless Strategy is released for consultation from 16/3/12 and delegated powers are given to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place / Cabinet Member for Place Shaping to approve the final version of the Homeless Strategy	The WHS sets out the strategic direction of homeless service delivery in the County and needs to go out to consultation prior to approval	12.3.12

**I confirm that the appropriate statutory officer consultation has taken place with regard to this decision.**

Dated: 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012

Signed: *Joe Phillips*

Councillor: JULIAN PHILLIPS  
Cabinet Member