

Committee/Meeting: Cabinet	Date: 3 rd July 2013	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No: CAB 005/134
Report of: Corporate Director Development and Renewal, Aman Dalvi Originating officer(s) Colin Cormack - Service Head, Housing Options		Title: Homelessness Statement 2013 - 2017 Wards Affected: All	

Lead Member	Councillor Rabina Khan, Cabinet Member for Housing, Development and Renewal
Community Plan Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Great Place to Live • A Prosperous Community • A Healthy and Supportive Community • One Tower Hamlets
Strategic Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide good quality affordable housing • Maintain and improve the quality of housing • Support more people into work • Manage the impact of welfare reform on local residents • Enable people to live independently • Keep vulnerable children, adults and families safer, minimising harm and neglect • Reduce inequalities

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Council and its partners have made considerable progress in improving services and reducing homelessness in the borough since the previous Homelessness plan was launched in 2008. The national landscape has changed considerably since the previous Homelessness plan. The challenging economic climate and legislative changes to welfare support and social housing will significantly affect current and future housing needs, and the ability of local housing partners to respond to these needs.
- 1.2 This statement sets out a partnership approach to continuing to tackle and prevent homelessness in light of the new challenges and opportunities facing the borough.

2. DECISIONS REQUIRED

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 2.1 Agree the Homelessness Statement 2013 – 17.
- 2.2 Agree that the action plan and outcome measures for the statement be finalised by the Homelessness Partnership Board.
- 2.3 Note the equality analysis of the statement.

3. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 3.1 National legislation including the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Localism Act 2011 and continuing financial and budgetary pressures will have considerable implications for homelessness in the borough. It is therefore necessary to review homelessness in the borough, the impact national legislative changes will have locally and how best local partners can respond to these changes to meet local needs.
- 3.2 Developing the statement has provided an opportunity for the Council and its partners to fully assess homelessness in the borough and develop a framework for preventing homelessness and supporting homeless households.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Mayor in Cabinet may choose not to agree the Homelessness Statement. This course of action is not recommended as there would be a considerable gap in the Council's approach to responding to homelessness in the borough, particularly in light of the much changed legislative and financial context. This will also have an impact on local partners who work with homeless households and those at risk of homelessness as there will not be an updated partnership approach to homelessness locally.
- 4.2 The Mayor in Cabinet may choose to amend the Homelessness Statement prior to approval. Should he wish to do so, any amendments should reflect local needs and the impact that national legislative changes will have. The resource and equality implications of any changes will also need to be considered.

5. BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The Council and its partners have made considerable progress in reducing homelessness and improving services for homeless households since the previous Homelessness plan was launched in 2008. This includes preventing over 3,700 households from being homeless between 2008/9 to 2011/12; a reduction in the number of people in temporary accommodation; a dedicated service for single homeless people – one of only a handful in

London; and making significant progress towards ending rough sleeping in the borough under the No Second Night Out initiative.

- 5.2 Local partners now face significant challenges in building on existing achievements to continue to prevent homelessness. These include major changes to the benefit system, social housing reform, prolonged economic uncertainties, and reduced resources for services – likely to continue in the coming years. All of these have profound implications for homelessness and related issues such as poverty, exclusion, employment, attainment and wellbeing. This statement therefore aims to ensure that local services are as efficient and effective as possible, to meet local needs in light of unprecedented challenges and the need to remain flexible in our response due to the current budget pressures.
- 5.3 The Council and its partners have a number of initiatives in place to help mitigate the local impacts of national reforms to the welfare benefit system, overseen by the Welfare Reform Task Group. This statement will form part of the borough's approach to support local people.

6. BODY OF REPORT

- 6.1 The development of the statement has been led by the Homelessness Partnership Board, a cross-agency group of statutory and voluntary services working with homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, chaired by the Service Head for Housing Options.
- 6.2 The statement and action plan are informed by a detailed homelessness review, produced in May 2012, which is summarised in the initial sections of the statement. This includes an analysis of the national and local context and its impact on services, homeless trends in the borough and progress against the objectives of the current homelessness statement.
- 6.3 Two action planning workshop sessions have also been held with partner organisations as part of the development of the statement. The workshops, focusing generally on preventing homelessness and specifically on children, families and young people and vulnerable adults, were well attended. Over 50 practitioners from a range of services including: housing, health, social care, youth services, community safety and community advocacy and advice, attended.
- 6.4 Following the workshops, further discussions have been had with partner agencies and council services to refine the objectives and actions of the statement. This includes presentations and further feedback: from social care, mental health, employment and enterprise and safer communities services.

Structure and Content

- 6.5 The overall aim of the statement is to tackle and prevent homelessness in Tower Hamlets, which includes: preventing homelessness; supporting those

who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; and providing accommodation for homeless households. This will be achieved through four strategic themes:

- Focus on homeless prevention and tackling the root causes of homelessness;
- Access to affordable housing options;
- Children, families and young people; and
- Supporting vulnerable adults

6.6 These themes are underpinned by three interdependent principles, which are intended to guide how we work together as partners, and as individual organisations. These are:

- Multi-agency working;
- Early intervention; and
- Building resilience

6.7 A key feature of the statement, informed by the principles, is the development and implementation of a one-stop-shop approach to services for homeless people.

6.8 A single point of contact will bring together a range of services for homeless people. Most homeless people rarely present with just a housing need, households presenting as homeless often have varying levels of other support needs. This includes employment and training, money management and income maximisation, parenting, substance misuse, mental health and domestic violence. In order to effectively use our resources to tackle and prevent homelessness, services must aim to identify and address all the support needs of homeless people, whilst at the same time focusing on building independence.

6.9 Another key change is the use of the new powers under the Localism Act for local authorities to discharge their homeless duty into the private rented sector. Up until now, the Council generally discharged its duty towards homeless households through a social tenancy. However, in light of the growing need and demand for social housing in the borough, and the potential increase in homeless applications due to welfare reform changes, the Council will need to rely more on the private rented sector to prevent homelessness, particular that outside of London and within South East England.

6.10 This of course means a greater focus on the quality and management of the private rented sector. It also requires closer working with other local authorities and agencies to ensure households placed outside of the borough are able to access the support services they need. A Private Sector Housing Statement has been developed to further address this.

6.11 An action plan for the statement is in development and will be finalised by the Homelessness Partnership Board.

Public Consultation Process

- 6.12 The Homelessness Partnership Board agreed the consultation plan, including the list of stakeholders to be consulted, consultation leads and an online survey as the primary means of consultation. Consultation on the statement took place between March and April 2013.
- 6.13 A short and accessible online survey was set up to capture the views of residents, service users and practitioners. A number of methods were used to publicise the survey. These included: email circulation to practitioners, who were asked to encourage their service users to take part in the survey; notices on the Council's Intranet, publication on the websites of key partner agencies; details of the consultation in the Members' Bulletin and notices in newsletters for residents and landlords.
- 6.14 A total of 72 people took part in the online consultation. In addition, written responses were received from organisations and discussions were also held at a number of partnership meetings. These include: the Children and Families Partnership Board, Young People Preparing for Adulthood Subgroup, Mental Health Partnership Board, Tower Hamlets Housing Forum, and Drug and Alcohol Team Partnership.

Key Findings

- 6.15 At least two thirds of all respondents agreed, or strongly agreed, with the key objectives within the statement. Of the remaining respondents, most felt indifferent (neither agree nor disagree), followed by those who disagreed.
- 6.16 The majority of areas highlighted as being crucial to achieving the aims of the statement had already been included. Some of the other issues raised were not within the remit of the Homelessness Statement and/or have already been addressed in other documents such as the borough's Allocation Scheme and the Overcrowding and Under-Occupation Statement.
- 6.17 There were some amendments to the statement as a result of the consultation. The main change is the addition of an objective on increasing the supply of housing across all tenures in Theme 2, reflecting the Overcrowding and Under-Occupation Statement. There have also been some minor changes to the narrative to emphasise points raised during the consultation. For example, the impact of welfare reform on the wellbeing of children has been made more explicit. Similarly, the importance of housing in achieving successful outcomes for vulnerable adults has also been strengthened.

7. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 7.1 The statement outlines performance and achievements since the adoption of the previous Homelessness plan in 2008 and sets out the demands that the service and its partners will face over coming years in an environment of changing need and reforms in legislation. Whilst there are no specific

financial consequences arising directly from the recommendations in the report themselves, ultimately the statement and its constituent elements will underpin key decisions in relation to service provision

- 7.2 The report highlights the potential impact of Welfare Reform (page 13), which will have significant financial effects on many residents of the borough and consequently is likely to have a major budgetary impact on the Authority. A thorough assessment of the impact on residents and Council services is currently being undertaken in order to assess the financial effects of the changes.
- 7.3 The statement outlines that any changes in service delivery must be contained within existing resources. The Housing Options Service has a gross revenue budget exceeding £30 million, with the major non-rent related resources being shown on page 28 of the Statement.
- 7.4 The main costs associated with the production of the Homelessness Statement itself are staffing related, with the consultation processes incurring expenditure on items such as advertising, printing, hiring venues and facilitating public meetings. These costs have all been funded from within existing budgets.

8. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL SERVICES)

- 8.1 As the local housing authority for Tower Hamlets, the Council has broad functions in relation to reviewing housing need, providing housing, combating overcrowding and providing accommodation to the homeless. The Council is required to provide free advice and information about homelessness, and the prevention of homelessness to people in Tower Hamlets.
- 8.2 Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 empowers the Council to carry out a homelessness review of Tower Hamlets and to formulate and publish a homelessness statement based on the results of that review. Such a statement may be for: (a) preventing homelessness in Tower Hamlets; (b) securing that sufficient accommodation is (and will be) available for people in Tower Hamlets who are or may become homeless; and (c) securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in Tower Hamlets who are homeless or may become homeless. Clearly as set out in the financial comments there are significant financial costs and risks to the authority and the Executive must consider how this will best be addressed in a way that will meet the statutory obligations and mitigate the budgetary impact whilst keeping the action plan under review and flexible to meet the burdens and duties.
- 8.3 Even without the specific power in the Homelessness Act 2002, it would be consistent with good administration for the Council to have a statement for preventing homelessness, having regard to the broad functions summarised

in paragraph 5.1. It is understood that the homelessness statement is not the housing strategy, which is referenced in the budget and policy framework.

- 8.4 When adopting the homelessness statement, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

9. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 An equality analysis of the statement has been completed, see appendix 2. This has shown that, based on available data, no target group will be adversely impacted by the statement.

- 9.2 Having somewhere warm and safe to live is fundamental to the Community Plan vision of improving the lives of all those who live and work in the borough. Homelessness is inextricably linked to poverty – including child poverty, worklessness and health inequalities that make the borough one of the most deprived in the country and limit the life chances of many local people. The Homelessness Statement will therefore contribute to the One Tower Hamlets principles of tackling inequality and promoting social inclusions.

10. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 10.1 None identified.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Homelessness Statement will help mitigate against the local risks posed by welfare reform changes.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The statement contains objectives for supporting domestic violence victims, ex-offenders and substance misusers to enable them to live as safely and independently as possible.

13. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

- 13.1 The implementation of the statement, including changes to services, will be achieved with existing resources.

14. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Draft Homelessness Statement
 - Appendix 2: Equality Analysis
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**Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England)
Regulations 2012**

Brief description of "background papers"
None