



JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21ST OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: HOMELESS PROJECT PLAN

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of the Homeless Project Plan that has been set for the Housing Solutions team for the period 2021/2022 based on the current identified key service area priorities to enhance the service, and seek their views prior to its presentation to Cabinet on 10th November 2021.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Members will be aware that all local authorities saw an increase in Homeless Presentations and referrals into interim Emergency accommodation from March 2020 as a direct result of the Covid 19 pandemic and the directive from Welsh Government that “no one should be left sleeping out”. The Homeless Project Plan identifies key work areas that will assist CCBC housing solutions team to address this increase and refocus on preventative measures rather than being crisis led.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the content of the report and the Homeless Project Plan.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To ensure that members are informed of the service area priorities outlined in the Homeless Project Plan.

5. THE REPORT

Introduction

- 5.1 The Housing Solutions team have been working to deliver the service in line with the

Housing Wales Act 2015 and the Gwent Homeless Strategy 2018-2022, which has historically focused on the prevention of Homelessness rather than it being Crisis led.

- 5.2 As a direct result of the Covid 19 pandemic in March 2020 the service moved to a Crisis led model in order to meet the increase in demand for assistance .
- 5.3 The Homeless Project Plan now sets out the service area priorities that will allow the Housing Solutions Service to review and refocus on the prevention of Homelessness.
- 5.4 The Homeless Project Plan is an interim plan and will be superseded in 2022 by both the Caerphilly Council Homeless Strategy and the Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan which needs to be submitted in draft to Welsh Government by June 2022.
- 5.5 Both of these Strategies will set out the five year action plan for Caerphilly to reduce Homelessness in the borough and ensure that those presenting to the Housing Solutions Service with Housing and Support Needs will be accommodated as rapidly as possible and will either prevent the need to access emergency accommodation or reduce time spent in emergency accommodation.

Homeless Project Plan Objectives

- 5.6 **Proactive and Accessible Service** – To improve the contact and communication with the service and ensure contact and appropriate relevant information can be obtained and shared across all mediums.
- 5.7 **Focus on Prevention** -ensure swift access to accommodation and support services to maximise prevention of Homelessness and to increase positive and successful outcomes for the service. To ensure that our current joint working, partnership arrangements and referral pathways maximise Homeless prevention and are reflective of current need.
- 5.8 **Reduce / Address Rough Sleeping** – Caerphilly has historically reported an issue with Rough Sleeping in the Borough, the Homeless Project Plan has set out its objectives to better understand the root cause of why people rough sleep so that this can be considered in the future Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan and to ensure that current commissioned services are meeting the need of this vulnerable group. The review will allow us to also consider the future needs of accommodation and the accommodation pathways on offer to support this vulnerable cohort into more stable and settled accommodation.
- 5.9 **Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan/ Housing First** - The Homeless Project Plan recognises the need to develop in line with Welsh Government Requirements a Rapid Rehousing Transitional plan to be submitted in draft by June 2022. A Report will be compiled and presented to Committee at a later date that will clearly outline the proposals being taken forward to address this for Caerphilly Council. We have started to expand on our Housing First Model and have implemented a Young Persons Housing First Scheme delivered by Llamau and an 18plus Scheme delivered by Pobl. The intention now is to enhance this and increase where applicable the support provision available to maximise those on scheme and to work with Common Housing Register Partners to provide accommodation to deliver this model. Housing First will also be considered as a specific action and section within the Rapid Rehousing Plan and both are referenced in our Local Housing Strategy as key service priorities and objectives.
- 5.10 **Emergency Accommodation** – A review is underway to look at reducing time spent

in temporary accommodation and to better understand the barriers that prevent move on and look at longer term strategic plans to overcome these. This will also allow us to consider in line with the Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan how Caerphilly wishes to deliver a temporary emergency accommodation model that is inclusive for all going forward.

- 5.11 **Partnership / Multi Agency Working** – The project plan recognises the importance that to deliver the objectives and prevent and tackle the root cause of Homelessness that working with key stakeholders and Statutory and Non-Statutory agencies will be key in addressing this. A review of current partnership / multi agency working arrangements is underway and where necessary models will be changed or set up to support the service in delivering this objective .
- 5.12 **Caerphilly Keys** – Throughout the Pandemic we have been able to continue to expand this service area and offer Private Sector accommodation with landlords attached to the scheme suitable and permanent accommodation. Caerphilly Council secured Phase 2 Welsh Government funding to increase the private sector stock portfolio for Caerphilly for 6 additional PRS units of accommodation that will be offered to those who are Homeless/ threatened with Homelessness. Caerphilly Keys will have its own Website launched in October which should enhance the profile of the scheme and attract additional landlords and a media strategy to promote this is being devised at this time following the website launch this month.
- 5.13 A future report will be submitted to Committee for a decision to be made on if we adopt the Welsh Government Lease Scheme Model for PRS accommodation or we remain with Caerphilly Keys as the preventative tool to prevent Homelessness and discharge our Statutory duty into the private rented sector.
- 5.14 **Review of Allocations Policy-** A review of the Allocation Policy will need to be considered as the Policy will need to be reflective of future legislative reform for Rapid Rehousing and will also need to be reflective of current need and demand and be transparent and easy for all those applying for accommodation in the borough to understand.
- 5.15 **Digital / Comms** – A review has taken place to ensure we have the relevant equipment to ensure we are able to assess applications across the service in a timely, person focused customer friendly way. As a result of this a new phone system has been purchased and will be implemented across the Housing Solution Team and an upgrade to the current IT system used within the service area has been included as part of a larger Housing Division procurement process for ICT systems and support.
- 5.16 **Staff Training / Performance** – A comprehensive training plan is being developed to ensure all staff within the service area have access to the relevant and appropriate training materials to support them in delivering in their roles. There is consideration being given to develop specific roles within the service area to better tackle and enhance the prevention of Homeless model and an example of this is that of Rough Sleepers / Those with offending backgrounds.

Conclusion

- 5.17 The Homeless Project Plan has highlighted the key areas where service review is being undertaken to prepare for future reports to be submitted to the Committee to outline the Strategic Plan. The Plan will also allow for some service delivery adjustments to be made at core future periods of time to enhance the service and

work with the Local Authorities Strategic and Corporate Wellbeing Objectives.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The Homeless Project Plan has been compiled based on the assumption that the current resources attached to the service area can assist us in driving forward the priority areas , however should this not be the case then current allocated service area budget would allow for interim changes to be made to improve aspects of the service area and Covid 19 funding from WG continues to offer financial support to the Authority until March 2022 for emergency accommodation placements.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An IIA has not been completed to accompany this report as it is for information only. Should further specific Reports be bought forward in the future attached to the Homeless Strategy and Rapid Rehousing Plan then a comprehensive IIA will be completed to accompany these reports.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no immediate financial implications attached to the Homeless Project Plan that at this time that cannot be met by current service area budgets.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There have been some additional posts created within the Housing Solutions Team to allow us to meet the demands and needs of the service area and future consideration will be given to the staffing structure to deliver the Rapid Rehousing transitional Plan once drafted.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 N/A

Author: Kerry Denman, Housing Solutions Manager
(Email: denmak@caerphilly.gov.uk , Tel: 01443 873544)

Consultees: Cllr John Ridgewell - Chair Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Mike Adams - Vice Chair Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Lisa Phipps - Cabinet Member for Housing
Dave Street - Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing
Robert Tranter - Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Stephen Harris - Head of Financial Services & Section 151 Officer
Fiona Wilkins - Housing Services Manager

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Jane Roberts-Waite | - Strategy & Co-ordination Manager |
| Lesley Allen | - Principal Group Accountant (Housing) |
| Shelly Jones | - Supporting People Manager |
| Sadie O'Connor | - Senior Housing Advice Officer |
| Lee Clapham | - Emergency Housing Manager |
| David Francis | - Senior Allocations Officer |
| Byron Jones | - Caerphilly Keys Officer |

Background

Papers: Housing Wales Act 2015
Gwent Homeless Strategy
Housing Support Grant Strategy
Local Housing Market Assessment
Welsh Government Covid 19 Guidance
Welsh Government Homeless Action Group Rapid Rehousing Draft guidance

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Homeless Project Plan

