

Meeting: Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Date: Monday 24th July 2017

Title: Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

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Service: Housing Strategy

Wards affected: All wards

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- 1) Inform Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee of Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and its implications; and
- 2) Update Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the ongoing review of the North Tyneside Council's Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013 – 2018.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee note the contents of this report.

3. Details

3.1 – Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Following a period of lobbying, which was predominantly driven by homelessness organisations such as Shelter and Crisis, a Private Members Bill was introduced to Parliament by MP Bob Blackman – the Homelessness Reduction Bill. The Bill sought to introduce new homelessness legislation and duties to prevent and tackle homelessness in England.

The Bill received cross-party support which made for a smooth transition through the legislative process in Parliament. The Bill ultimately received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017 to become the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The legislation is currently expected to be enacted in April 2018.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 establishes a number of new duties to ensure that local authorities adopt a more preventative approach to homelessness and provide all households at risk of homelessness with the advice and support they require. Duties include:

- An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
- Clarification of the action an authority should take when someone applies for assistance having been served with a section 8 or section 21 notice of intention to seek possession from an assured shorthold tenancy.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants.
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Ahead of this enactment date Government has announced that an amended Code of Guidance will be published in October 2017. This Code of Guidance will provide local authorities with detail on how they should exercise their homelessness functions and apply the various statutory criteria in practice.

3.2 – Delivery Project

To ensure that North Tyneside Council fully understand and prepare for the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act a project team has been created. This group will develop and deliver an Implementation Plan to ensure that the Authority continues to meet its existing homelessness duties as well as the new duties.

As part of this project it will be important to raise awareness of the legislation and its implications. Comprehensive consultation on our approach will therefore be planned and undertaken with a range of stakeholders including Lead Members, Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee, Members, service users, and partner organisations.

To ensure that the project is delivered appropriately a governance structure will be established. The proposed governance structure can be seen at Appendix 1.

3.3 – Strategy Review

As the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013 – 2018 is due to expire in 2018 North Tyneside Council will need to produce a new strategy to outline a vision and establish strategic objectives for the future provision of homelessness services in the borough.

The strategic review process started in February 2017 and will include a desktop review to establish key achievements of our existing Strategy, the identification of key strategic partnerships and sourcing examples of best practice. In addition to this a comprehensive consultation plan is being developed to ensure that we engage with Members, service users and partners throughout the development of our next Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

Following the consultation phase a draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy will be developed with an intended implementation from April 2018. The renewed Strategy will outline our strategic response to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and will include actions to prevent and reduce homelessness in North Tyneside.

4. Background Information

The following documents have been used in the compilation of this report and may be inspected at the offices of the author:

- [North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013-2018 and Action Plan](#)

5. Appendices

Homelessness Reduction Project Governance Structure