

**TITLE OF REPORT: REFERRAL FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17 JUNE 2008 – ADOPTION OF A NEW HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY FOR 2008-2013**

*The following is an extract from the Draft Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 June 2008.*

**14. ADOPTION OF A NEW HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY FOR 2008-2013**

The Housing Options Manager presented a report of the Head of Housing & Environmental Health to the Committee which provide details of the proposed new Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Homelessness Strategy for 2008-2013, attached as Appendix A to the report. The report was due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 24 June 2008.

The Committee was informed that the new strategy document had been produced in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council (SBC). As all Local Housing Authorities were required to produce new homelessness strategies, the pooling of resources with SBC had enabled both organisations to develop and share information and expertise in connection with the management of homelessness that had been integrated within the proposed strategy document. More specifically, the partnership arrangement with SBC had enabled both local authorities to :-

- Conduct a joint review of local homelessness issues;
- Provide joint services to members of the public, where appropriate; and
- Fully engage the North Quadrant Homelessness Forum (NQHF) in the development of the proposed homelessness strategy.

The Council had been very successful in its management of homelessness over the past few years. In particular, the number of households in temporary accommodation had been reduced from a peak of 124 in 2005 to 52 in May of this year. This significant reduction may be attributable to the re-prioritisation of services in order to focus on homelessness prevention, additional investment and policy changes in respect of social housing allocation policy. However, the current problems in the housing market were increasing pressures on homelessness services.

The Housing Options Manager advised that the current Homelessness Strategy had been produced for five years, and that this period ended in July 2008. All Local Housing Authorities were under a legal obligation to produce new homelessness strategies by the end of July 2008.

It was noted that the proposed Homelessness Strategy included an Action Plan and Performance Framework that would form the basis of the implementation of the tasks contained in the document. Should the new Strategy be adopted, the NQHF would become the delivery vehicle for the Action Plan. The NQHF would also monitor the Performance Framework contained in the document, and an updated Action Plan would be published annually.

Members debated the Strategy and asked questions regarding Service User involvement and partnership working, which were answered by the Housing Options Manager.

**RESOLVED:** That a report on the progress made on the action plan included in the Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013 be presented to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to be held in June 2009.

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:** That the Stevenage Borough Council and North Hertfordshire District Council Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013 be adopted

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To comment on the report, prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 24 June 2008.

**[The report to which the above referral relates is Item 10 on this agenda]**