

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Portfolio Holder

Date of Meeting: 13 February 2014
Report of: Strategic Housing Manager
Subject/Title: Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Don Stockton: Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning, Economic Development, and Regeneration; Councillor Janet Clowes: Portfolio Holder for Health and Adult Social Care

1 Report Summary

1.1 Work is underway to construct a Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy for Cheshire East Borough Council to ensure an appropriate landscape of accommodation with care is engendered in the local area. This report summarises the findings of the draft Strategy and requests portfolio holder approval to progress the draft Strategy for public consultation to ensure that the Strategy is representative and reflexive of the views of affected constituents and other stakeholders.

1.2 The Strategy surveys a wide range of evidence and research to determine the accommodation needs of vulnerable people, before recommending strategic priorities to address these needs. The Strategy stratifies vulnerable people into the following eight primary groups:

- Older people
- Learning disabilities
- Mental health issues
- Cared for children/care leavers
- Drug and alcohol issues
- Physical and sensory disabilities
- Domestic abuse
- Homelessness

1.3 The Strategy assumes a central role in Cheshire East's strategic forward planning: it is one of the two major change programmes (5.2) designed to deliver on Priority 5 of the Council's Three Year Plan: *Securing housing that is locally-led, community-based, and meets local needs*. This priority is, in turn,

a crucial policy in realising Outcome 5 of the Plan: *People Live Well and for Longer*.

1.4 Extension research and consultation has been conducted across Council services and wider partners, resulting in the production of the draft Strategy. This draft highlights a variety of strategic priorities for each client group, contained within the Strategy. There a number of key emerging priorities from the draft Strategy that cut across all client groups, captured in the Strategy's policy framework. This is summarised below:

- Outcome 1: 'Deliver services to enable vulnerable people to live in their homes independently for longer.' This will be achieved by:
 - Continuing to review and improve care and support services to ensure that independent living and reablement is achievable and promoted to as many vulnerable people as possible.
 - Promoting the use of assistive technologies and home adaptations to ensure that homes are amenable and accessible for vulnerable people across the spectrum of needs.
 - Building links with the local community to draw upon untapped support for vulnerable people, maximising autonomy, limiting social isolation, and minimising care costs.
- Outcome 2: 'Deliver an improved offer of specialist, supported accommodation within the Borough, tailored to the needs of vulnerable people.' This will be achieved by:
 - Continuing to refine and appropriately expand the menu of specialist and supported housing that caters for vulnerable client groups, looking to create synergies across groups where appropriate.
 - Working with partners to develop new housing models for vulnerable people, prioritising sheltered and extra care housing as a means of promoting independent living.
 - Mapping specialist accommodation provision to the stages of each client group's treatment or recovery journey, creating a 'stepped' model of accommodation integrated into client pathways.
- Outcome 3: 'Improve access to services and the quality of information available to vulnerable people and commissioners, so both can make informed choices about accommodation, care, and support.' This will be achieved by:

- Working to achieve comprehensive and consistent intelligence on vulnerable groups to best inform service commissioning and decision-making.
- Ensuring that the contact points for accommodation services and advice is accessible and the information clear for all user groups, whilst promoting future planning and proactive service engagement.
- Utilising the Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy as a flagship strategy to unite and shape the approach to vulnerable person's accommodation Council services and partner organisations.

2 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that:

2.1.1 The draft Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy and its preliminary findings are noted.

2.1.2 Officers are approved to publically consult on the attached strategy draft, before incorporating the responses into the finalised strategy.

3 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 Finalising the Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy will be the catalyst enabling the Council to:

3.1.1 Map the current picture of accommodation supply and demand by client group to baseline a picture of vulnerable persons housing within the Borough.

3.1.2 Use this information as a basis for developing an optimal model of accommodation and support provision across all vulnerable client groups to inform Cheshire East's commissioning cycle and development priorities.

3.1.3 Integrate effective and appropriate housing into a multi-disciplinary and cross-agency approach for improving well-being for vulnerable people.

3.1.4 Provide and incite an evolving evidence base to inform planning decisions and emergent policies.

3.1.5 Realise Outcome 5 of the Council's Three Year Plan: *People Live Well and For Longer*.

3.1.6 Realise Priority 5 of the Council's Three Year Plan: *Securing housing that is locally-led, community-based, and meets local needs*. The Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy is one of the two major change programmes to deliver on this priority, and therefore assumes a critical role in the Council's Three-Year Plan.

3.2 Public consultation is required to:

3.2.1 Ensure that the findings and priorities identified within the Strategy are representative of the views of affected constituents and wider stakeholders.

3.2.2 Ensure that the Council is transparent and participatory in the formation of its strategic direction.

4 Wards Affected

4.1 All

5 Local Ward Members

5.1 All

6 Policy Implications

6.1 The Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy is prioritised with the Council's Three Year Plan framework:

- Outcome 5: *People Live Well and for Longer*
 - Priority 5: *Securing housing that is locally-led, community-based, and meets local needs*.
 - § Change Programme 5.2: *Deliver an accommodation strategy for vulnerable adults and those with learning disabilities*.

6.2 The accommodation of vulnerable people by virtue concerns a host of Council services that collectively work towards improving prospects and well-being for affected client groups. As such, the emergent Strategy champions a holistic and integrated approach, aspiring to catalyse and unite Council services,

community partners, and providers in a concerted direction. In its construction extensive liaison has taken place across adults' services, children's services, public health, housing, and planning to ensure that the Strategy reflects the priorities and initiatives of these services. For instance, the Strategy channels the emergent strategic commissioning intentions, has fed into the lifecourse work surrounding learning disabilities, and reflects the drug and alcohol service recommissioning.

- 6.3** Principally, the Strategy corroborates and augments the Council's commitment to enabling independence, reablement, and recovery through the appropriate provision of accommodation and support services. Such an approach is increasingly enshrined throughout the Council's commissioning wings, and the Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy supports this by advocating the provision of accommodation models that foster independence and reablement - such as supported accommodation, sheltered housing, and extra care schemes as an alternative to institutional care.
- 6.4** Initial findings suggest that such an approach is required to manage the well-documented demographic pressures caused by longer life expectancy and advances in medical and social care. The Council can expect a rise in the number of vulnerable people in need of specialist accommodation, and an opportunity exists to consider the accommodation landscape within the Borough and engineer it so that more vulnerable people are supported to live fulfilling, independent lives within the community.
- 6.5** As such, the Strategy will set the direction of travel and accommodation priorities, which will inform future service commissioning work and planning policies to realise the determined approach through provider management and future development.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1** Full business cases which consider all financing options (both internal and external) and any potential risks to the Council will be developed for any major projects or developments that arise as a result of the Strategy's priorities. These will be prepared and assessed on a project-by-project basis at the appropriate time. Such business cases will follow the established route for ratification including gateway approvals at the appropriate points in accordance with the Council's project management protocols.
- 7.2** The exploratory and on-going actions recommended in the Strategy will be met from within existing resources.

- 7.3** Similarly, the Strategic Housing team will continue to lead and dedicate existing resource to the project-management of the Strategy's construction, including the progression to public consultation and the incorporation of consultation feedback into the final Strategy iteration.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1** The Strategy is the girding by which Cheshire East will provide increasingly appropriate specialist accommodation for vulnerable people that drives superior outcomes. It is the first, agenda-setting stage of the commissioning cycle that will ultimately ensure that vulnerable people are optimally cared for and enabled to live independent and vibrant lives in housing tailored to their needs and supportive of their specific issues.
- 8.2** In doing so, the Strategy supports the Council in fulfilling its duties to vulnerable people as delineated under legislation including: the Children Act (1989), the Children Act (2004), Children Leaving Care Act (2000), Mental Health Act (1983), Housing Act (1996), the National Assistance Act (1948), the National Health Service and the Community Care Act (1990), the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offender Act (2012), and the Homelessness Act (2002). These items of legislation underpin the Council's duties and services to vulnerable people, which the Strategy is a key component in delivering.
- 8.3** The legal implications of any project or development that arises as a result of the Strategy's direction will be assessed individually as these initiatives progress through the Council's project management gateways.

9 Risk Management

- 9.1** There are risks that the Council does not possess an appropriate accommodation mixture to deliver optimal outcomes for vulnerable people. Many accommodation support services report large undersupplies, whilst the supply of supported and specialist accommodation is frequently unable to match demand. Moreover, an overreliance on institutional care within certain client groups is heightening costs for self-funders and social services. There is therefore a need to construct a strategy for vulnerable people's accommodation to fathom the accommodation landscape and deduce the strategic priorities for each vulnerable client group. This will inform the commissioning and development process to ensure that there is an optimal specification of vulnerable people's accommodation within the Borough.

- 9.2** There is a risk that different elements of the Authority have different approaches to accommodation and relevant support services, as well as divergent information on the character and needs of vulnerable client groups. As such, the Strategy will help coordinate and connect the work of Council services and wider partners and providers, ensuring a consistent and strategic approach to vulnerable people's accommodation.
- 9.3** Vulnerable person's accommodation is complex in nature, involves a large number of agencies, and is a deeply emotive and fundamental issue that has wide implications across individuals, families, and communities. As such, it is vital that affected individuals and agencies have the opportunity to comment on any relevant strategic direction, to ensure that the full range of opinions, experiences, and knowledge are incorporated. By publically consulting on the draft Strategy, the Council negates the risk of implementing a strategic direction that does not properly reflect the range of needs and views within the Borough, ensuring it is representative.
- 9.4** In terms of the risks associated with developing and implementing a new strategy, there are a number of associated and inherent risks:
- *Timescale slippage:* depending on the extent of comments received during the public consultation, there is the potential for time pressure in making any alterations. However, this has been mitigated by a well-monitored approval timescale, factoring in potential risks and charting all approval gateways.
 - *Momentum, actions, and delivery:* As with any strategy, there is a risk that strategic direction does not translate into transformative action on the ground. This is being mitigated by the creation of a comprehensive action plan for each client group with service responsibilities, which will be connected to an emergent monitoring framework. Moreover, engagement and support has been assured from the relevant services through involvement in the construction of the Strategy and the channelling of service initiatives and priorities. Finally, cross-service working groups are already being established to explore some of the key themes arising from the emergent strategy.
 - *Funding for major projects:* The development of new specialist housing is frequently costly and complex, factors that increasingly delimiting in a time of austerity and curtailed public funding. To affect any new developments inspired by the Strategy, there will thus be a need to maximise private finance through partnership and creatively use public funding and Council-held assets to leverage and incite.

10 Background and Options

- 10.1** This emergent Strategy has built upon Cheshire East's extant work in creating a supported housing strategy, produced by consultants Red Quadrant. However, this revised Strategy greatly expands upon the remit and client groups contained in the previous work. Such expansion was considered necessary to capture the nuance, detail, and overlap between client groups, ensuring a more comprehensive and holistic piece of work.
- 10.2** The Strategy was constructed through extensive cross-service and pan-organisational consultation. This provided a crux of key-findings and priorities that were then expanded, corroborated, and tested through consultation. A consultation event was held in November 2013, attended by Cheshire East councillors, Council officers, housing providers, and support service providers. The results of this workshop provided the feedback required to convert the initial findings into a strategy. Workshops were held for each client group, the key messages of which are summarised in each chapter under 'consultation response'.
- 10.3** The Strategy next needs to go out for public consultation, after which the views and responses will be compiled and incorporated into the Strategy prior to formal ratification by Cheshire East Cabinet. The finalised Strategy is scheduled to be presented to Cabinet for approval in April 2014.

11 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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