

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to:	Executive
Date:	20 March, 2017
Subject:	Interim Homelessness Strategy and Work Plan
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Aled M Jones
Head of Service:	Shan Lloyd Williams
Report Author: Phone Number: E-mail:	Elliw Llŷr 01248 752137 ElliwLLyr@ynysmon.gov.uk
Local Member:	n/a

A – Recommendation/Recommendations and Reason/Reasons
<p>Recommend that the Executive approve:-</p> <p>A1. The Interim Homelessness Strategy and Work Plan for the period 2017-2018, after which it is intended to present a Regional Strategy and Local Work Plan for a period of 5 years.</p> <p>Reasons</p> <p>In order to fulfil Part II of the Housing Act 2014, local authorities need to agree on a Homelessness Strategy. The intention of this paper is to present an Interim Strategy for 2017-18 as well as a work programme to create a Strategy for 2018 onwards for a period of 5 years.</p> <p>1. Background</p> <p>1.1 Local Authorities are required to form a Homelessness Strategy in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent Homelessness • Provide suitable housing for people who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless • Provide suitable support for people who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless <p>There is an expectation that the strategy is in place by 2018. The Local Authorities of North Wales have expressed their intention to create a Regional Strategy with each Local Authority forming an individual Work Plan, and the Interim Strategy therefore needs to be approved for 2017-18 and that is the intention of this paper.</p> <p>1.2 This Interim Strategy and work plan have been developed in collaboration with our new partners who support homeless people or who need support in order to avoid being homeless.</p> <p>1.3 The housing operational services have been adapted in order to provide a service which responds to the requirements of the Act. There are two aspects to the service, i.e. Assessment and Solutions and our General Allocations Policy has been adapted in order to reflect the way</p>

applicants are assessed with regard to local contact and how critical their housing needs are.

1.4 There is an intention to draw up a Regional Homelessness Strategy for 2018 onwards and a workshop will be held in March in order to scope this work. The work of identifying the challenges has already taken place on the Island as part of the work of creating this work plan. The intention is to use this and statistical information regarding the population needs assessment and data regarding people who have access to homelessness services in order to be able to collaborate on a local level in order to prevent homelessness. The scoping paper and work programme will be approved by the Housing Management Team during April 2017.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this option?

Another option would be not take action for a period of about 18 months until the Regional Strategy is adopted. This could mean failing to collaborate with our key partners and risking the Supporting People Grant and the Homelessness Prevention Grant by Welsh Government as there would be no strategic overview of what we as a Council are trying to achieve. Not taking action would be contrary to the Future Generations Act, 2015 and the Social Services and Welfare Act, 2014.

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

Due to Legislative requirements, Executive approval is required.

CH – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

The Council has already approved a General Allocations Policy which reponds to the requirements of the Act as well as a Supporting People Plan Executive (14.2.17) which provides a service for vulnerable people who could be at risk of losing their homes without this support.

D – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?

There is a duty on the Council to provide this service for vulnerable people and a budget has been recognised for providing this service as well as a grant contribution by Welsh Government which funds support Services through the Supporting People Grant and the Homelessness Prevention Grant.

DD – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Senior Leadership Team (SLT) (mandatory)	

2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	No comments
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	No comments
4	Human Resources (HR)	No comments
5	Property	n/a
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	n/a
7	Scrutiny	n/a
8	Local Members	n/a
9	Any external bodies / other/s	The Strategy and Work Programme are based on priorities which have been identified by members of the Homelessness Prevention Forum which includes a number of service providers.

E – Risks and any mitigation (if relevant)		
1	Economic	
2	Anti-poverty	
3	Crime and Disorder	
4	Environmental	
5	Equalities	
6	Outcome Agreements	
7	Other	The Local Housing Strategy has been the subject of an impact assessment and adoption of the Homelessness Strategy was an objective within that strategy as well as an Impact Assessment completed on this Interim Strategy.

F - Appendices:
Interim Homelessness Strategy and Work Plan

FF - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

INTERIM HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2017-2018

1) Introduction

Isle of Anglesey County Council has developed an interim Homelessness Strategy with its partners which provides a plan for how the county will sustain and improve services which prevent homelessness and assist those who do become homeless. In particular three priority areas have been identified for the next 18 months following a workshop where organisations discussed the current risks for those most vulnerable to homelessness and how these could be addressed.

These priority areas are:

- Working to ensure the private rented sector best assists with homelessness prevention
- Ensuring tenants with mental health, drug and alcohol issues receive the support they need
- Addressing issues arising from the continuing implementation of welfare reform

2) Background

i) Legislation

Part II of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 now provides a new legal framework for homelessness services in Wales

Local authorities in Wales must produce a Homelessness Strategy in order to achieve the following objectives

- the prevention of homelessness;
- that suitable accommodation is provided for people who are or may become homeless;
- that satisfactory support is available for people who are or may become homeless.

The 2014 Act states that that all Local Authorities must adopt a Homeless Strategy in 2018. Isle of Anglesey County Council has agreed to work with Local Authorities across North Wales to develop a comprehensive Homelessness Strategy in accordance with the statutory code of guidance for adoption in 2018. Each individual Local Authority will be responsible for producing its own local action plan. For this reason, an interim strategy has been developed to guide work until 2018 when the new regional Strategy is expected to be adopted.

ii) National context

Part II of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 has significantly changed the statutory duties placed upon local authorities regarding homelessness and has placed a much greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness.

Effective partnership working is a key component of part II. The Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness Code of Guidance 2015 states "*the successful development and delivery of the strategy will be dependent upon strong partnership arrangements with other statutory and voluntary sector organisations as well as the private rented sector*".

The 2014 Act made various aspects of the Welsh Government 10 Year Homelessness Plan for Wales (Welsh Government 2009), statutory duties. The 11 themes of the Homelessness Plan have been used to shape this interim Homelessness Action plan for the authority.

In turn the intentions of Part II of the Act align closely with the wide ranging intentions of the Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. A theme of the Well-being of Future Generations Act is to make public bodies think more about the long-term, working better with people and communities and each other, looking to prevent problems and taking a more joined up approach. Similarly, the emphasis in Social Service and Wellbeing Act is that well-being is best achieved through joined up services working to meet the individual needs of those in receipt of services. Over the period of the interim Strategy and on into the full 2018 Strategy this type of approach will need to become embedded in joint working between services to prevent homelessness both in a crisis situation and in the long term. As required under the Social Service and Well-being Act a population needs assessment, produced in partnership by North Wales authorities, is currently being finalised and will provide an important information base for understanding and acting on needs which relate to homelessness.

iii) Local context

On Anglesey a Homeless Prevention Forum meets regularly to enable agencies to work in partnership to prevent and respond to homelessness. The forum is made up of agencies, stakeholders and interested parties who deliver a service to Anglesey residents who have accommodation and/or support needs relating to homelessness or the prevention of homelessness.

The local authority itself has specific duties to help people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. In response to the new homelessness prevention duties in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, Isle of Anglesey County Council has reviewed the structure of the Housing Options team and reviewed the Housing Allocation Policy. Housing Options has been divided into two teams; assessment and solutions. The new structure ensures all customers receive housing advice within five working days of the first contact and subsequently a housing options interview is available for every customer who requires advice or assistance with obtaining suitable housing.

The Allocation Policy has changed from points based to a banding system. A customer's band status is determined by whether or not they have a local connection and how urgently they need housing.

The Policy means that only customers in housing need are able to register for a social tenancy and these customers will have a better understanding of their housing priority and how soon they are likely to be offered housing. Those who are not entitled to register for social housing are informed about other options such as how they can on 'Tai Teg', Anglesey and Gwynedd's affordable housing register for intermediate rental or assisted home ownership, which can help them find accommodation to meet their needs.

iv) Issues affecting people at risk of homelessness on Anglesey

The interim strategy responds to any existing gaps in provision and also takes account of wider issues which may increase the risk of homelessness for some groups or make meeting their needs more challenging. The following have all been identified as important concerns which need to be addressed in the action plan to 2018 and more broadly across the Council. Two issues are of particular significance:

a) Impacts of Welfare reform

The long term programme of changes to welfare benefits continues and over the next two years mitigation or planning is needed in relation to:

Measure	Main risk
1. Roll out of universal credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct payments• Online applications
2. Proposed capping of social rents at Local Housing Allowance levels from 2019	Rate for under 35s likely to be set at £58.11 pw (shared room rate) making tenancies unaffordable in the social sector.
3. Freeze of local housing allowance at 2016 levels for four years.	Reduction in private lets at rents affordable to residents in need.
4. Increasing numbers subject to benefits sanctions	Increased risk of homelessness due to rent arrears and reduced income.
5. Potential restrictions on housing benefits to 18-21 year olds	More young people put at risk of homelessness.

b) Wylfa Newydd power station

In Autumn 2016, Horizon undertook the Pre- Application Consultation II re. the planned Wylfa Newydd Power Station on Anglesey. It is the intention of Horizon to apply for a develop consent order in 2017 with the final investment decision expected in 2018.

Main site works are expected to take place from 2019/2020 (subject to any changes in Horizon's develop consent strategy), however enabling works for the project have already begun and workers from outside the island are already working here and needing accommodation. IACC has identified a high risk of impacts on the housing of local people as a result of the influx of construction workers and has started working with Welsh Government, neighbouring authorities and Horizon to discuss its concerns and seek appropriate mitigation measures. The Homelessness Prevention Forum will also have an important role in monitoring the effects of increasing numbers of workers linked to the Wylfa Project seeking accommodation in the area.

3) Development of the interim Strategy

To identify the key areas of work during the interim period a workshop, facilitated by the Welsh Local Government Association's lead Homelessness and Supporting People Officer, was held in November 2016 attended by members Anglesey's Homeless Prevention forum and other stakeholders.

Prior to the workshop partners were asked to complete a questionnaire which asked them to note down what they feel are currently the main causes and risks to people becoming homeless and initial ideas for collaboration to try and address the issues.

The top 3 areas for concern were identified as follows:

- The private rented sector
 - Landlords not willing to accept tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit.

- Rent levels exceed the Local Housing Allowance.
- Unsuitable accommodation; condition and size.
- Tenants with mental health, drug and alcohol issues
 - Unable to engage effectively with support services.
 - Partnership arrangements with the Health Service.
- Universal Credit
 - Direct payments
 - Online applications.
 - Housing Benefit restrictions for under 21s.
 - Increased number of sanctions.

The above were discussed in further detail during the workshop with a focus on finding solutions to address the issues and have resulted in the three priority themes of the strategy and many of the related actions.

The Action Plan

The action plan covers a period of up to 18 months when the regional strategy will be put in place. and takes into account many of the themes used by the Welsh Government within the 2009 10-year homeless plan. The 10 year homeless plan sets out a long term approach to addressing homelessness.

The 11 themes of the 10 year plan are

- Improving Health and Wellbeing
- Developing the private rented sector
- Sustaining Tenancies
- Providing housing advice
- Minimising mortgage repossession
- Criminal Justice – breaking the cycle
- Preventing homelessness from domestic abuse.
- Improving life chances; skills and employment
- Maximising financial inclusion
- Tackling rural homelessness
- Housing Asylum Seekers and Refugees

The 11 themes recognise that homeless people have a diverse range of needs and that varied services and interventions are needed to engage, support and empower service users. By addressing these areas Anglesey is putting in place a comprehensive series of measures which aim to address the cause of homelessness.

The first three of these are the particular focus of the interim action plan as these were areas identified as immediate priorities by stakeholders in the recent consultation exercise.

The Action Plan will be monitored quarterly by Anglesey's Homeless Prevention Forum and reported to the Anglesey Housing Partnership.

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ACTION PLAN



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Homelessness Prevention Action Plan 2017-18

Provision of Housing and Welfare Advice

Aim: to ensure that the focus of advice is primarily on prevention and is accessible to all who need it.

No.	Project/Task	Action	Target date	Required Outcome	Measured by	Lead partner	Progress
1)	Further improve advice to prevent homelessness by ensuring the Housing Options Team and third sector organisations work together as effectively as possible.	a) Develop and adopt Service Level Agreement which agrees priorities and clearly sets out the roles of different organisations with an agreed monitoring framework	September 2017	Improved and measurable joint working to prevent homelessness	Completion and implementation of SLA	Strategic Housing, IACC	
2)	Ensure best possible access to financial advice and digital inclusion for people who claim	Map sources of financial advice and training on IT suitable for this group and ensure the options are made	September 2017	Better access to financial and digital inclusion by service users	Completion and publication of mapping	Strategic Housing, IACC	

	benefits and those at risk of homelessness.	known to providers and service users.		and opportunities to avoid duplication of services	exercise		
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Developing the private rented sector

Aim: Improve access to a range of decent accommodation in the PRS, which is affordable and sustainable for vulnerable people.

No.	Project/Task	Action	Target date	Required Outcome	Measured by	Lead partner	Progress
3)	Promote increased knowledge among existing and potential landlords of the types of properties needed on Anglesey by people needing to rent.	Share local housing need information gathered by the local authority with private landlords Via newsletters, landlord subgroup and annual forum	November 17	Better understanding among private landlords of local needs, with a view to an improved supply of smaller properties at manageable rents	Appropriate channels used to share information. Feedback from landlords.	IoACC Environmental Health (Private Sector) team.. Partners: IACC Housing options, housing strategy officers support providers to build picture of needs	
4)	Explore options to facilitate sharing, particularly for single people under age 35 as a response to welfare benefit changes which restrict housing costs to shared accommodation rate	Establish task and finish group to consider opportunities Stage 1 – report on local opportunities for developing shared accommodation models Stage 2- set up pilots based upon initial appraisal		Stage 1 – understanding of tenancy issues, opportunities and risks Stage 2 – pilot established		Digartref to lead Task and Finish group to consider opportunities	

5)	<p>Re. Private rented Sector Develop a programme of actions which encourage and support private landlords to offer tenancies to more vulnerable customers who are facing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review effectiveness of measures currently in use. 2. Consider potential measures including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions which provide landlords with more knowledge and experience of how to support tenants with support needs or in receipt of benefits • Signpost more potential tenants to the Credit Union so they can understand the benefits of Jam Jar accounts • Identify more landlords who are willing to take tenants on low income and in receipt of benefits. • Use incentives in appropriate circumstances to incentivise landlords to grant tenancies to more vulnerable tenants 		<p>Greater access to accommodation in the private rented sector by more vulnerable customers</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Updated programme of action to increase engagement from private landlords on Anglesey 2) More landlords listed by the Council as willing to accept low income / benefit dependent tenants. 	<p>IACC Service Manager Community Housing</p>	
6)	<p>Contribute to the improvement of condition of properties in the private rented accommodation.</p>	<p>Continue to ensure private rented accommodation is compliant with current legislation.</p> <p>Continue to promote Rent Smart Wales. Begin enforcement for</p>	<p>Report at end of second and fourth quarter</p>	<p>Reduce the number of tenants moving on due to poor conditions of private rented properties.</p>	<p>Number of landlords registered on Rent Smart Wales. Number of referrals re. private rented</p>	<p>IoACC Environmental Health (Private Sector) team.</p>	

		landlords not yet registered as part of Rent Smart Wales.			sector undertaken by EHOs and number of enforcements.		
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Improving Health and Well-being

- Ensure that housing standards promote health and wellbeing.

No.	Project/Task	Action	Target date	Required Outcome	Measured by	Lead partner	Progress
7)	Carry out work to begin to improve partnership arrangements with the NHS in relation to people at risk of homelessness.	Members of Anglesey Homelessness Prevention Forum to make joint feedback around weaknesses around hospital discharge, detox programme, dual diagnosis to a) Local Service Board b) Hospital discharge sub-group of Housing and Health 2025* (*Housing and Health 2025 is a North Wales partnership working to ensure that avoidable health inequalities exist in North Wales in 2015 will end by 2025.)	December 2017	The Local Service Board is made aware of the where improvements could be made .	Response from LSB.	IACC Strategic Housing team to convene task and finish group from members of Homelessness Prevention Forum	

Sustaining tenancies

- Tailor-made support services to suit the needs of vulnerable people to enable them to gain and maintain the skills and/or confidence necessary to gain and maintain accommodation.

No.	Project/Task	Action	Target date	Required Outcome	Measured by	Lead partner	Progress
8)	Explore expansion of initiatives which support engagement with vulnerable service users who are difficult to engage with through existing routes	Consider setting up or extension of -befriending/ peer monitoring service. --drop in sessions. -advocacy services and mediation services	Measured twice yearly	Engage with people previously unwilling to engage through offering a wider range of initiatives of a more informal and flexible nature	No of service users engaging as a result of the new initiatives.	IACC Housing Options team, Housing Management and Strategy Team to work with Digartref.	
9)	Develop options for continuation of support beyond 2 years in cases where the individuals circumstances warrant it.	Evaluate the adequacy of 2 year support; explore other options i.e dip-in and out service.	Dec 2017	Providing a service which meets the needs of customers who have continuing support needs	Results of the evaluation, followed by implementation of proposal if appropriate.	Supporting People.	
10)	Develop a consistent approach for customers requiring support which enables them to access the right support as smoothly as possible Improve access to Supporting People services through establishing a Single Point of Access based with the Council's Housing Options Team	Set-up a single point of access within the Local Authority for all supporting people funded services.	Dec 2017	The role of each partner is understood. Customer accesses the right service for them.	New single point of access in place and working effectively.	Supporting People.	