

**North East Derbyshire District Council**

**Cabinet**

**8 March 2017**

**Housing Options – Gold Standard Homelessness Strategy**

**Report of Councillor Mrs E A Hill, Portfolio Holder with Responsibility for Housing Strategy and Social Inclusion**

This report is public

**Purpose of the Report**

- To provide an update on the progress in the Councils application to achieve the Gold Standard for Housing Options Services.
- To seek approval to proceed with the applications and to allocate the appropriate staff resources to complete the application process.
- To seek approval of the North Derbyshire Homelessness Strategy.

**1 Report Details**

- 1.1 In the “Making Every Contact Count” report in 2012 the Government introduced a Gold Standard Challenge for Housing Options services across the country. This imposed 10 Challenges for services to aspire to with the focus being on homeless prevention.
- 1.2 The first stage of the assessment is a 3 day review carried out by peers from neighbouring authorities. The assessment is based on a national framework and provides a score to establish whether or not a council can progress to the next stage. A **score of 60%** is sufficient to proceed to the next stage of the assessment process. This minimum score states that the service operates on an average level and meets all legal requirements.
- 1.3 NEDDC underwent the initial peer review assessment in March 2016 by colleagues from Amber Valley Borough and South Derbyshire District Councils with support from the DCLG Specialist Advisor for Homelessness.

After the in depth assessment and evaluation of our results we received our formal feedback in July being that we **scored 83%**. This was described by the Specialist Advisor as being “**outstanding**” and “**one of the highest in the country**”.

- 1.4 This has placed NEDDC in an excellent position to proceed to the next stage in the application process. The next stage in the process is to apply individually for each of the 10 local challenges detailed below:-
1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
  2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
  3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice.
  4. To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative.
  5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support.
  6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord.
  7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
  8. To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness, reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs.
  9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
  10. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks.
- 1.5 To apply for an individual challenge requires a considerable amount of preparation and data/documentation collection in order to evidence that as a council we comply with the standard set for each challenge.
- 1.6 Each submission is then assessed by the DCLG Specialist Support Team and peers from other Local Authorities who have already achieved that particular challenge. This can take up to two months.
- 1.7 If successful in the first challenge application NEDDC will immediately be awarded “Bronze” Status whilst we continued to work on additional challenges. When 5 challenges have been successfully achieved NEDDC will be awarded “Silver” status. “Gold” status will only be awarded once all ten challenges have been achieved.
- 1.8 To assist in achieving the Gold Standard and also due to the current strategy having expired we have developed a North Derbyshire Homelessness Strategy in partnership with Bolsover District and Chesterfield Borough Councils.

- 1.9 This strategy and action plan has been created with the Gold Standard in mind. Following consultation with stakeholders we have identified a number of priorities which provide clear focus and direction to enable us to prevent homelessness as effectively and efficiently as possible in partnership with our neighbouring authorities as well as other partner agencies such as advice and support providers.
- 1.10 The strategy sets out the following vision which we feels encompasses what we are trying to achieve over the next 5 years: ***“By working with our partners to prevent homelessness, we will ensure that everyone has access to a place they can call home.”***

To achieve this vision the following objectives have been identified:-

- **Objective 1:** Develop a robust young person’s housing pathway by delivering a range of housing solutions with our partners
  - **Objective 2:** Create strong partnerships with all stakeholders to tackle homelessness for all those at risk , including those most vulnerable households
  - **Objective 3:** Prevent rough sleeping across the area
  - **Objective 4:** Prevent homelessness by tackling and reducing financial deprivation within our communities
  - **Objective 5:** Work towards each local authority achieving the Homelessness Gold Standard
- 1.11 All the strategic objectives are underpinned by a combination of influencing work at a national and local policy level and improving local practice to achieve positive change for people who find themselves homeless.
- 1.12 A full copy of the Homelessness Strategy is attached as **Appendix 1**.

## **2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

- 2.1 Currently there are only two local authorities that have achieved the Gold Standard so for NEDDC to achieve the Gold Standard would put us amongst the elite authorities in the country. It is anticipated that to achieve all ten challenges and Gold Status will take approximately 12 to 18 months if adequately resourced.
- 2.2 At present the Private Rented Sector & Housing Options Officer is completing the submissions with some support from the Housing Strategy Team. Due to the complicated nature of the applications and preparation required this will have an impact on current duties although it is felt that this should be prioritised. With the Joint Housing Strategy and Growth Manager continuing the process until the Housing Options Manager vacancy is filled.
- 2.3 It is a legal requirement for the Council to have a Homelessness Strategy. Without a current Homelessness Strategy that is fit for purpose it will severely hinder our progress towards the Gold Standard.

### **3 Consultation and Equality Impact**

- 3.1 Full consultation on the review of the previous homelessness strategy and development of the new strategy has been completed with partners.
- 3.2 A completed Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as **Appendix 2**.

### **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 Not to proceed with the applications. This would result in severe damage to NEDDC's reputation locally and nationally.
- 4.2 Not to allocate the appropriate staff resources. This would result in poor submissions for the challenges and extensive delays in achieving Gold Standard.
- 4.3 Not to approve the Homelessness Strategy. This would leave the Council vulnerable to legal challenges and would affect the Gold Standard application process.

### **5 Implications**

#### **5.1 Finance and Risk Implications**

- 5.1.1 There are no financial implications.

#### **5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection**

- 5.2.1 There are no legal or data implications.

#### **5.3 Human Resources Implications**

- 5.3.1 There are no implications.

### **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 To proceed with the applications and to allocate the appropriate staff resources to complete the application process.
- 6.2 To receive updates when each challenge or Bronze, Silver or Gold status is successfully achieved.
- 6.3 To approve the North Derbyshire Homelessness Strategy 2016-2020.

**7 Decision Information**

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> (A Key Decision is an executive decision which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
<b>Is the decision subject to Call-In?</b> (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No
<b>District Wards Affected</b>	N/A
<b>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</b>	C-11 Achieve an overall annual success rate of 80% for households who considered themselves homeless for whom casework resolved the situation.

**8 Document Information**

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	North Derbyshire Homelessness Strategy 2016-2020
2	EIA for the Homelessness Strategy.
<b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
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