

DEVELOPING A COUNTY COUNCIL OPERATING MODEL FOR TACKLING HOMELESSNESS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

To: **Communities and Partnership Committee**

Meeting Date: **8th November 2018**

From: **Sarah Ferguson, Assistant Director – Housing, Communities and Youth**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **N/A** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To consider the contribution of Cambridgeshire County Council to identifying future housing need and the reduction of homelessness, and agree to the development of a Council-wide operating model.**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to:**

- a) Consider how the Council can ensure it complements the work of our District Council partners, supporting them in the delivery of their strategies and plans, including the suggestions made in section 2.5.**
- b) Agree to develop a formal operating model setting out the role of the County Council to prevent homelessness.**
- c) Agree that the Communities and Partnership Committee will act as the lead Committee for the work, with reference back to all other relevant Committees as required.**

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1.	BACKGROUND
1.1	<p>Cambridgeshire County Council has a vested interest in ensuring that the housing needs of the client groups we serve, and our staff, are well met, and to work collaboratively with partners to ensure that the chances of people becoming homeless are reduced. The provision of housing which does not meet needs, or the lack of an appropriate affordable home for vulnerable people, can cause much greater demand on County Council resources if not adequately addressed. Furthermore, failure to work as an active partner to meet the countywide housing needs of low paid but essential staff (teachers, social workers and others) has a significant impact on the capacity of core services to deliver, particularly in parts of the county where homes are increasingly unaffordable.</p>
1.2	<p>Although the County Council is not the statutory Housing Authority, it does have key statutory duties and responsibilities, the execution of which impact on the housing economy and clients for whom we have a duty of care. These clients include: older people and vulnerable adults (with learning, physical or mental disabilities); older people with care needs; young adults with learning or mental health difficulties and those leaving care; vulnerable client groups who may be victims of domestic abuse, drug or alcohol dependant or offenders and ex-offenders.</p> <p>In addition, stable housing supports peoples' wellbeing, helping them lead more productive lives, promoting independence and in turn supporting wider council objectives.</p>
1.3	<p>In the senior management review conducted in 2017, the service directorate for Communities and Safety was created, which includes an explicit focus on housing and homelessness prevention. The role of the service directorate includes developing collaborative and positive relationships with our partners, in this context the District Councils (who are the local housing authorities), and we are keen to ensure that this role is effectively fulfilled.</p>
1.4	Meeting the needs of clients
	<p>The ways in which the County Council currently supports the housing needs of different client groups is through a number of distinct activities. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioned activity: dedicated funding to provide housing or floating support for the most vulnerable and those at risk of becoming homeless • Direct support to people with highly complex needs – Making Every Adult Count Team • Sheltered housing • Residential care – adults and children • Extracare Housing • The allocation of Disabled Facilities Grant to District Councils • Adults Positive Challenge programme • Joint strategic work with District Councils to secure improved joint working around homelessness

	<p>The housing needs of people are changing, with people living for longer and survival rates for people recovering from complex illness or with a disability significantly improved. More people with complex needs are also being supported within the community. Solutions to meet these needs are evolving with the advance of technology and artificial intelligence, which in turn makes an impact on the types of housing options required. There is an increasing disconnect between the fixed assets of historic housing options (e.g. hostel accommodation or sheltered housing) and new evidence and options emerging which may create more cost effective and sustainable housing solutions for vulnerable people.</p>
1.5	<p>In addition, there has been an increase in the numbers of people presenting themselves as homeless to Housing Authorities at District level in the last two years, and an increase in rough sleeping within Cambridge City and Peterborough. Whilst within a two tier authority system it is the statutory responsibility of District Councils to discharge the duty to prevent or relieve homelessness, the impact of homelessness can be dramatic and increase the need for statutory County Council services if it is not addressed – for example through increased need for child protection services, victim services (e.g. domestic abuse), delayed transfers of care or specialist provision for vulnerable people. There is no doubt that working together with our partners we will have a far greater chance to prevent homelessness and its consequences, thereby improving our residents' wellbeing and managing our cost pressures.</p>
1.6	<p>The new Homelessness Reduction Act places a new duty on public sector agencies, since October 2018, to refer individuals or families who may be at risk of homelessness to local housing authorities. It is however the expectation that agencies will work together collaboratively to address early signs of difficulty and prevent homelessness wherever possible, in order to improve outcomes for clients and reduce public sector expenditure.</p>
1.7	<p>In advance of the Act coming into effect last spring, the District Councils, Peterborough City Council and the County Council has delivered a cross-partnership Homelessness Trailblazer project (sponsored by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Public Services Board (CPSB), and funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government). This has provided excellent evidence on what is possible and what can work when permission and resources are released to develop innovative solutions. The first report on the Trailblazer was considered by CPSB in October 2018, and recommended the commissioning of further work to develop sustainable options for tackling and preventing homelessness. It is proposed that this is overseen by the Housing Board (see 2.1 below).</p>
1.8	<p>Planning homes for growth</p>
	<p>The Council has a key role to play in the growth of housing solutions across the county, and planning infrastructure for new communities. These roles and functions are led by the Place and Economy directorate, through the Growth and Development team. This report and its proposals focus on the demand aspects of homelessness prevention, as opposed to the supply of housing.</p>
2.	<p>MAIN ISSUES</p>

2.1	<p>Section one provides a brief overview of current work taking place across the County, and some of the pressures and changes across the system which impact on outcomes and ultimately public sector expenditure. It is recognised that getting 'up stream' in tackling demand management into Council services has to include a consideration of whether there is a new and different way of tackling housing demand and homelessness. Acting preventatively with our partners to secure homes for people is a first step and presents opportunities for public sector reform across the system.</p>
2.2	<p>Key strategic developments at a national level include a £2 billion fund for housing associations to build more affordable homes in England over the next 10 years. Phase Two of the Community Housing Fund has recently opened, a £163 million fund available for community-led groups to deliver new affordable housing schemes across England up to March 2020. In August the Government launched its Rough Sleeping Strategy – a £100 million fund which includes measures such as offering rough sleepers rapid specialist assessments, a boost of up to £30 million for targeted mental health funding, £50 million for homes for people ready to move on from hostels or refuges and providing specialist accommodation and funding 'navigators' to help people access support. At the same time it published its Social Housing Green Paper which aims to 'rebalance the relationship between landlords and residents, tackle stigma and ensure social housing can act as a stable base and support social mobility'.</p>
2.3	<p>Locally £170m of investment is being made in affordable housing by the Combined Authority across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, who have just published their Housing Strategy. Each District Council also publishes its own Housing Strategy and Homelessness Reduction Strategy, by statute. In addition there is a renewed focus on housing and homes in new communities through the work of the Public Services Board. Within these governance arrangements, The Housing Board (Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and West Suffolk) provides a key platform for dialogue with partners at a strategic level, and is increasingly positioned as the forum through which cross cutting proposals can be developed.</p>
2.4	<p>This work is taking place in an unprecedented financial climate for Cambridgeshire County Council, where challenging savings are having to be realised across a range of services. Although this may appear contradictory, there has never been a more pressing, or opportune, moment to clarify the role the County Council should take to support our partners and to ensure we are delivering the best outcomes for our residents.</p>
2.5	<p>Alongside this, it is proposed that the County Council continues to pursue, with partners, the opportunities for system redesign work in relation to homelessness prevention, building on the work of the Trailblazer. These two areas of work will form the basis of a County Council operating model, which can be used to inform further developments at a District, County and Combined Authority level. To support this approach, it is important that we complement the work of our District Council partners, supporting them to deliver their existing strategies and plans. The section below gives examples of homelessness prevention activity being undertaken by each District Council, and suggests some tangible actions that the County Council could take to further support and enhance this work.</p>

2.5.1	<i>Cambridge City Council</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in a Dual diagnosis team – working with vulnerable clients whose housing situation is being impacted by mental ill health and substance misuse • Joint investment in ‘Making Every Adult Matter’ initiative which provides wrap around support to clients with complex needs • Developing the Housing First model as a route to supporting clients into long term and sustainable tenancies • Targeted work to prevent young people becoming homeless • Proactive work to reduce the numbers of rough sleepers in the City • Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation and social housing
2.5.2	<i>East Cambridgeshire District Council</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain the proactive work the Council has done on preventing homelessness • Working closely with private Landlords to sustain a good quality and level of private sector rented accommodation • Specialist support for vulnerable clients who are at greatest risk of becoming homeless • Supporting tenants to manage through significant welfare reform changes
2.5.3	<i>Fenland District Council</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative work with homeless households originating from Eastern Europe • Proactive work with private sector landlords to improve advice and support to private sector tenants and prevent homelessness • Leading the Homelessness Trailblazer for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, on behalf of all 7 Local Authorities in the area • Partnership work with the third sector for temporary homelessness accommodation provision
2.5.4	<i>Huntingdonshire District Council</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in effective preventative action to enable people at risk of becoming homeless to stay in their homes • Embed through partnership working the early intervention principles piloted under the Homelessness Trailblazer programme • Supporting and developing pathways of support for the most vulnerable groups • Working with partners and developers to positively influence the development of new communities which will meet the needs of local people • Increasing the provision of temporary accommodation for those households that require accommodating at the point of crisis
2.5.5	<i>South Cambridgeshire District Council</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase supply of private rented properties through the Shire Homes Lettings private sector leasing scheme • Improving access to timely information and advice to people who may be at risk of becoming homeless and those who have become homeless • Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation • Close joint working with the housing benefits team to manage the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit

2.5.6	<p>All District Councils will be taking forward many of the actions outlined in 2.5.1 – 2.5.5, taking account and tailoring an approach based on local need. The County Council is a key partner in supporting a reduction in homelessness at a District level. Examples of the role the County Council could play include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive review of future accommodation needs of vulnerable clients, in order to shape local provision and the roll out of the Combined Authority's Housing Strategy, and to influence the allocation of County Council assets and resources • Review of Housing Related Support in conjunction with District Councils, in order to ensure that the Council's investment is directed towards clients in ways which make the greatest difference to their long term housing options • Driving innovation through investing in transformative approaches • Ensuring that commissioned (or provided) advice and information services are effectively signposting people at risk, and supporting the delivery of district based homelessness prevention strategies • Equipping front line workers in children's and adult services with the necessary information and tools to effectively divert a household from becoming homeless in a timely way • Playing a role with District Councils as a key partner with other statutory agencies such as Health/Public Health/CCG and hospitals, criminal justice, fire and rescue, DWP - helping these agencies work together as part of a system wide network to identify and prevent potential homelessness
2.6	<p>If agreed by Members, a cross council working group will be formed to develop the operating model, led by the Assistant Director for Housing, Communities and Youth, to fully scope the work and lead the activity, with further reports being submitted to Members. Given the cross cutting nature of the work, it is proposed that the work is overseen by and reports to the Communities and Partnership Committee, but with reporting lines back to all other relevant Council Committees. This work will be informed by the partnership approaches and proposals being developed under The Housing Board.</p>
3.	<p>ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES</p>
3.1	<p>Developing the local economy for the benefit of all The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to relieve homelessness includes working with people at risk to maximise income and tackle debt. Effective marshalling of Council resources with partners to prevent an escalation of housing need will have a positive impact on the local economy
3.2	<p>Helping people live healthy and independent lives The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to an affordable home which meets an individual or families' needs in an essential requirement for people to live healthy and independent lives
3.3	<p>Supporting and protecting vulnerable people The following bullet points set out details of implications identified by officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing work on priorities for County Council clients and staff aims to

	<p>secure longer term sustainable housing solutions for vulnerable clients through a more effective and strategic approach to preventing homelessness with partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working on system wide solutions to tackling homelessness presents greater opportunities to meet the needs of vulnerable people within a diminishing resource envelope.
4.	SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS
4.1	Resource Implications
	<p>The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There may be potential to realise savings across the Council through the marshalling of resources and assets in a more coordinated way in order to meet need. As work is scoped further there may be a business case for investment in order to achieve longer term savings through innovative solutions, and reducing the likelihood of making an adverse impact on outcomes. At this stage of the work no staffing implications have been identified.
4.2	Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications
	There are no significant implications within this category
4.3	Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications
	<p>The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of the early work will need to identify the statutory role of the County Council in relation to housing and homelessness prevention, as well as where there is a particular contribution for the Council to make to support the reduction in demand.
4.4	Equality and Diversity Implications
	<p>The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of the approach, at its core, will be considering the current and future needs of people affected by disability, amongst other client groups with a specific housing need. A community impact assessment has not been carried out at this stage of the work, but will be completed during the process to test against any adverse impact on fairness, equality and diversity.
4.5	Engagement and Communications Implications
	<p>The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed engagement will be planned and implemented across the Council, with partners and clients impacted by the review if the recommendations are agreed by Members.

4.6	Localism and Local Member Involvement
	<p>The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong interface with District Councils and Members • If agreed by Committee, more detailed engagement between County Council and District Council Members will be undertaken.
4.7	Public Health Implications
	<p>The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with partners to secure sustainable good quality homes which meet the needs of County Council clients is a building block to supporting a healthy life and reducing health inequalities

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Tom Kelly
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	Yes Name of Officer: Paul White
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Salma Kantharia
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Name of Officer: Joanne Dickson
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Val Thomas

Source Documents	Location
None	