

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 6 August 2008

Subject: West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 (Appendix 1).

2. Background

- 2.1** The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a duty on Local Authorities to produce a homelessness strategy that seeks to prevent and alleviate homelessness. This Strategy replaces the original West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2003-2006.
- 2.2** The development and implementation of the original strategy acted as a catalyst for driving forward service improvement and partnership working in tackling homelessness in West Dunbartonshire. Some of the achievements of the original strategy are noted below:-
- West Dunbartonshire was the first local authority in Scotland to eliminate the use of B&B accommodation for homeless households
 - The award of a B grade signifying a 'good performance' in relation to services to homeless people arising from the Pathfinder Inspection of Housing Services
 - The development of a Housing Support Team
 - The introduction of a Health and Homelessness nurse to assess and respond to the health needs of homeless people
 - An increase in the number of temporary accommodation units
 - The establishment of positive working practices with local housing associations to accommodate homeless households
- 2.3** The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness Etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 set out a series of actions that are required by local authorities prior to the abolition of the priority need test by 2012. Therefore the prevention of homelessness is the underpinning element of this Homelessness Strategy to ensure that the Council can meet its responsibilities detailed by statute.

- 2.4** West Dunbartonshire Council, together with a range of partner agencies in the statutory and voluntary sectors, have been working together to develop the West Dunbartonshire's Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013.
- 2.5** It sets out how all partners will work together to prevent homelessness occurring and what services will be provided to people who do find themselves homeless.
- 2.6** The Strategy has been completed in accordance with the Code of Guidance on Homelessness issued by the Scottish Executive (now Scottish Government).

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Homeless presentations have risen steadily since 2003, although a levelling out of homeless presentations is anticipated. West Dunbartonshire in terms of population has the highest incidence of homelessness in Scotland.
- 3.2** The Strategy aims to deliver the vision of ending homelessness in West Dunbartonshire at the end of its lifespan. In particular it is hoped that significant progress can be made with the prevention of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire.
- 3.3** The Strategy aims to deliver the following strategic aims:
- Prevention - To prevent homelessness occurring in West Dunbartonshire
 - Housing Options - To improve the range of housing options available in West Dunbartonshire and to respond effectively to households in homelessness crisis
 - Sustainable Solutions - To ensure a sustainable solution for individuals who have experienced homelessness
 - Commitment - To ensure a commitment to continue to develop and improve services to tackling homelessness through a partnership approach
- 3.4** The new West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy is the product of an in depth and wide ranging consultation process where the views of service users and providers have been acted upon. To produce this strategy 112 different organisations were engaged, and importantly those individuals who have experienced homelessness.
- 3.5** An integrated impact assessment of the strategy has been carried out. This process highlighted a number of positive impacts on health and equalities which could result from the implementation of this strategy.

4. Personnel Issues

4.1 No direct personnel issues are raised in this report.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The report has no immediate financial implications, although any future agreement to improve or increase services to prevent and allievate homelessness will have financial implications.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 There is a risk that without the strategic aims and objectives being approved by Committee, the strategic and operational direction in tackling homelessness in West Dunbartonshire will be compromised.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 provides a wide ranging and robust assessment of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire and will shape strategic direction in tackling and preventing homelessness over the next five years.

8. Recommendation

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Acknowledge the work of the partner agencies in contributing to the development of the Homelessness Strategy.**
- (ii) Approve the West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 and authorise its immediate introduction and publication.**
- (iii) Approve the Action Plan detailed in Appendix 1 of the strategy.**
- (iv) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development to work with partner agencies to implement the strategy and secure the outcomes as defined.**

Elaine Melrose

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Date: 15 July 2008

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Appendix: West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

Background Papers: West Dunbartonshire Homelessness Strategy 2003-2006
Integrated Impact Assessment - Homelessness Strategy

Wards Affected: All