

Present: Councillor Jane Loffhagen (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Calum Watt, Councillor Debbie Armiger,
Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Councillor Bill Mara,
Councillor Mark Storer and Councillor Emily Wood

Apologies for Absence: None.

28. Confirmation of Minutes - 22 November 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

29. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

30. County Homelessness Strategy

Alison Timmins, Housing Solutions Manager:

- a. presented the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021 review document, to consider the consultation summary document and to seek comments on the new Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2022-2027
- b. gave the background to the strategy as detailed at paragraph 2 of the report
- c. referred to Appendix 3 of the report which detailed extensive consultation with stakeholders and collated the achievements of the last strategy which shaped the strategic direction of the new strategy. A series of focus groups, one-to-one meetings and a survey collated vital feedback , which would enable the strategy to meet the aims of the seven district council's and partners.
- d. explained that the Rough Sleeper Strategy had been incorporated into the document to allow the Council to form a collective and robust approach to homelessness
- e. highlighted the new priorities for the next 5 years:
 - *Prevent – identify those that were at risk of becoming homeless as early as possible and through the Duty to Refer work with them to prevent homelessness or rough sleeping*
 - *Protect – identify the most vulnerable and ensure individuals were safe from harm, and had access to the support and services to maintain their health and wellbeing*
 - *Partnerships- strengthen and maintain relationships to bring together resources and knowledge to prevent and relieve homelessness*

- *Place – ensure accommodation was both available and suitable for those that needed it and explore opportunities to increase the supply of accommodation*
- *Plan – take a proactive and joined up approach to tackling rough sleeping and homelessness and explore funding opportunities to ensure we meet the needs of all client groups*

f. referred to paragraph 6 of the report and explained how the strategy would be monitored

g. invited members questions and comments.

Question: Asked if the Cost of Living Crisis had been included in the Strategy.

Response: The Strategy was overarching therefore it had not been included within it. The next step was to develop a position statement for Lincoln with key actions for the City and the Cost of Living Crisis would be addressed within this.

Question: Asked why someone would not be accepted as homeless.

Response: Anyone could present to the Council as homeless. If they were considered as statutory homeless then the Council had a duty to assist them. If the Council did not consider them as statutory homeless then they would still be provided with advice.

Question: Referred to the graph at page 20 of the Strategy in relation to the initial assessment and asked how the decision of whether they were statutory homeless or not was made.

Response: They needed to meet specific criteria to be considered statutory homeless, this included for example, British Citizen, homeless or threatened with homeless within 56 days, have priority need eg, pregnancy, medical condition or children and also have a local connection to the area. If they were not considered statutory homeless the Council would still provide appropriate advice.

Question: Referred to page 20 of the Strategy in relation to initial assessments and commented that the Strategy stated that a total of 11,103 initial assessments were completed between 2018 and 2021, and then following those initial statements 14,364 cases were owed a prevention relief or duty to try and resolve their housing issue. She questioned why the number had increased following the initial assessment.

Response: This would be looked at and an answer provided following the meeting.

Question: Referred to the consultation summary at page 56 of the Strategy and asked if an accountability chart would be provided as a separate document.

Response: An accountability chart was produced, however, due to the amount of information that was required in the chart, it was too difficult to follow, therefore a decision was made not to include it within the Strategy.

Question: Asked where the chain of responsibility was included in the Strategy.

Response: This would be included in the monitoring and would provide transparency.

Question: Referred to the Equality Impact Assessments at page 59 of the Strategy and asked why some of them were left blank.

Response: The Equality Impact Assessment was completed by North Kesteven District Council according to their democratic processes.

Question: Asked if there was an increase in homelessness due to the Cost of Living Crisis.

Response: The numbers had steadily increased since lockdown and many could be tracked back to the Cost of Living Crisis. We were yet to see the real impact of the Cost of Living Crisis.

Question: Commented that one of the reasons for people becoming homeless was due to private landlords selling their property and asked who were the landlords selling these properties to and could the Council utilise them.

Response: Most properties were sold on the open market, the Council's Strategic Housing team did look to see if they were suitable, some properties had been purchased back.

Question: Asked if there was enough money available to implement the Strategy.

Response: Considerable funding had been provided under the homelessness prevention grant which was predominantly used for staffing. It was not about money but about resources, more suitable accommodation was needed and also having the right multi agency services being available to get people the right help needed.

Question: Asked if an update on the County Homelessness Strategy could be provided to a future appropriate meeting.

Response: An update could be provided to a future meeting of Policy Scrutiny Committee.

Question: Asked if another agency were not able to help someone was there a process to follow up the case.

Response: Partnership working across the County had improved enormously, there were clear communication channels and the opportunity to escalate cases if necessary.

Question: Asked what temporary accommodation was used for families and how long they would be placed there before being housed.

Response: The Council had some temporary accommodation stock, or bed and breakfasts could be used. Families should not stay in a bed and breakfast for any longer than 6 weeks. They could be waiting a long time to be housed, for example a family needing a three bedroom house could be waiting for 9-12 months.

Question: Asked if gambling addiction was included within the Strategy

Response: It would depend, each individual case would be looked and advice and support would be provided.

Question: Asked if debt was included in the Strategy.

Response: The Council would offer advice and support and would point them in the direction of debt management. If they were homeless through no fault of their own the Council would house them, if they were intentionally in debt they may not be considered statutory homeless, but support would still be provided in a different way.

RESOLVED that

1. the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 be supported

2. an update on the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 be provided to a future meeting of Policy Scrutiny Committee.

31. Health Scrutiny Update

The Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee updated members of the business that had been discussed at the Health Scrutiny meeting held on 14 December 2022, these were:

- Temporary Closure of Hartsholme Centre – Male Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit
- Lincolnshire Health and Social Care Patient Flow and Discharge Programme
- Lincolnshire's Interim Integrated Care Strategy
- Lincolnshire Acute Service Review Implementation – Update

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

32. Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2022-23 and Executive Work Programme Update

The Chair:

- a. presented the report 'Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2022-23 and Executive Work Programme Update'.
- b. presented the Executive Work Programme December 2022 – November 2023.
- c. requested councillors to submit what items they wished to scrutinise from the Executive Work Programme and policies of interest.
- d. invited members questions and comments.

Members discussed the Executive work programme in detail and identified the following potential items for the Policy Scrutiny Work Programme:

- Pay Policy Statement 2023/24
- Disposal of Property
- Housing Pipeline Approach
- Greetwell Place Managed Workspace - Future Arrangements

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that she would liaise with the relevant Officers to find out if the items identified were within Policy Scrutiny Committees remit and schedule them into the work programme as appropriate.

The Chair referred to the Policy Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 14th March 2023 and commented that there was a large number of items scheduled and suggested that an additional meeting be scheduled for February 2023.

The 7th February was identified as a potential date for an additional Policy Scrutiny Committee. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that she would

liaise with Officers to find out if any items could be brought forward and arrange an additional meeting on 7th February 2023 if necessary.

RESOLVED that:

1. the work Policy Scrutiny work programme be noted.
2. the Executive work programme be noted.