

3. City of Lincoln Homelessness Strategy

Daren Turner, Strategic Director of Housing and Investment:

- a. presented the Lincoln Homelessness Strategy and supporting action plan for consideration and comments prior to referral to Executive for approval
- b. explained that the Lincoln Homelessness Strategy 2024-2029 sat within a framework of documents which aimed to improve the housing situation in the City including the Lincoln Housing Strategy 2020-2025 and the Lincolnshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027
- c. gave an overview of the background of the strategy as detailed at paragraph 3 of the report
- d. advised that during development of the strategy consultation took place with a number of staff from the Council and with agencies who worked with households who were homeless or threatened with homelessness
- e. further explained that although the responsibility for producing the strategy was with the Council, it was produced in partnership with various agencies within the City and was the City's strategy for homelessness rather than the Council's strategy for homelessness
- f. referred to appendix 3 of the report and outlined the objectives of the strategy:
 1. *Make homeless a rare occurrence by early intervention and timely homeless prevention.*
 2. *Make homelessness as brief as possible by providing high quality temporary and supported accommodation at points of crisis.*
 3. *Make the experience of homelessness a one-off occurrence by increasing access to secure and settled homes in Lincoln.*
- g. invited members questions and comments.

Question: The Government fee provided for temporary accommodation was only £91 per week and the Council had to pay the difference out of its own budget to cover the cost of Bed and Breakfast. Was the Council considering acquiring buildings for temporary accommodation to address this issue?

Response: The Local Housing Allowance was £91 per week to spend on Bed and Breakfast. The average cost of a Bed and Breakfast could be in the region of £90 per night, therefore the Council had to pay the difference from the General Fund. Officers were always actively looking to bring additional temporary accommodation into the housing stock and had recently acquired 20 properties. The Council not only needed temporary accommodation but also move on accommodation and long term affordable housing to address the issue.

Question: What duty did the Council have under the Homelessness Act 2002?

Response: The Council had 56 days to determine if a person was homeless. During the 56 day period it was the Council's duty to provide them with housing and support.

Question: Would the funding for Homelessness change due to the new Government?

Response: Historically funding had been built into core budgets, this was removed as part of the austerity measures. The funding was now provided by annual grants which were initially for one year and were predominantly used for staffing, however, this caused issues with staff retention. Councils then lobbied the Government on this issue and the grant allocation was now provided on three year cycles. It was expected that the funding would continue given the increase in the number of homeless individuals.

Question: How did the Council address the disruptions to children's education and the effect on their mental health due to homelessness?

Response: The Council did all that it could as a landlord to support families. Officers worked with Lincolnshire County Council to provide support and wrap around care to families and children.

Question: Was the child's current school taken into consideration when families were placed in temporary accommodation?

Response: Yes, access to school was considered when placing families in temporary accommodation and transport to school was provided if necessary.

Question: How would the strategy be monitored?

Response: The departmental performance monitoring system would assess the action plan on a regular basis to monitor the progress.

Question: How would the increase in the number of homeless people and the early release of prisoners affect the strategy and would the strategy remain relevant?

Response: The activities within the strategy would remain relevant. The strategy was flexible which would allow the Council to adapt and respond to challenges. Changes were needed to national policy to address the increased homelessness.

RESOLVED that the City of Lincoln Homelessness Strategy be supported and referred to Executive for approval.