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To: Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 23rd April 2014

Subject: **Homelessness Strategy**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

This report presents an outline of Ashford Borough Council's Homelessness Strategy and identifies current operational practices.

Recommendation

The Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to support the implementation and delivery of the Homelessness Strategy. The Board is also asked to consider the issues raised at the conclusion of the report.

Homelessness Strategy Overview

Vision

The vision for the borough, described in the Ashford 2030 Framework is

Best Placed in Britain for Living and Opportunity

The direction we provide to prevent homelessness in Ashford in the homelessness strategy will contribute to this ambition. We want to see a reduction in the number of households who become homeless and an end to rough sleeping. To do this there will be 3 main outcomes:

- 1. Ashford wide commitment to preventing homelessness wherever possible, beginning with access to information and advice for all.**
- 2. Quality housing services and suitable accommodation for people for whom homelessness cannot be prevented.**
- 3. Settled and sustainable homes, with access to housing support where needed.**

Our strategy describes how we will achieve these outcomes whilst contributing to the 2030 priorities.

2030 priority	For people who are at risk of homelessness, or homeless, the council and partners, will:
Prosperity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support people who have lost their job to keep their home until they find work, and prevent repossession • Enable access to education, training and employment, and support people to contribute to the local economy • Advise people about their housing and employment options, and other matters that will affect their prospects and prosperity
Community:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and enable people to meet their own housing needs wherever possible • Provide timely information and advice so people can make informed choices and avoid crisis • Support voluntary and community groups who work with people who are at risk of homelessness, or homeless • Enable people to contribute to the local community and neighbourhood • Involve people in decisions about homes and housing services
Quality:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to quality, affordable and suitable, housing • Enable people to access services that will improve their quality of life, for example health or leisure services • Support people to overcome crises and to move towards independent living • Ensure that homes and housing services that contribute to our outcomes are value for money

Summary of detailed outcomes

Outcome 1

Ashford wide commitment to preventing homelessness wherever possible

There will be:

- An up-to-date understanding of homelessness in Ashford so that we are able to direct our resources appropriately.
- A commitment from all agencies in Ashford to recognise homelessness triggers and to refer those at risk to appropriate services.
- Readily available information and advice so that residents are able to meet their own housing needs as far as possible, and prevent homelessness.

Outcome 2

Quality housing services and suitable accommodation for people for whom homelessness cannot be prevented

There will be:

- Quality homelessness services and temporary accommodation suitable for people with different needs.
- Clear pathways to settled housing, a better quality of life, health and wellbeing.

Outcome 3

Settled and sustainable homes, with access to housing support if needed

There will be:

- Suitable accommodation and support for people with health, care or support needs who are at risk of homelessness, or homeless.
- More social and affordable housing, and effective housing management to ensure this resource meets housing needs and prevents homelessness.
- Improved access to suitable and good quality private rented homes, that are affordable and sustainable in the longer term.

Issues for discussion with the Board

1. Demand for accommodation outstrips supply which often results in the use of costly and unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation. It is therefore essential that all partners refer those under potential threat of homelessness to the Housing Options Team as soon as possible so that there is maximum opportunity to prevent homelessness.
2. The Housing Options Team is developing work with the private rented sector so that we can secure suitable alternative housing for those under threat of homelessness. We offer a range of options and also manage our own in house lettings agency to try to achieve this. However we are aware that partners may also be engaging with the private rented sector locally and it is important that we have a joint strategy for this.
3. We need to undertake a re-refresh of the homelessness strategy to ensure it is fit for purpose. To this end we need a mechanism to

open an ongoing dialogue with partners within the Board. The strategy is not just about housing but also the services and support networks that other partners provide such as health and social services.

4. We need to jointly identify clear housing pathways for vulnerable people. Especially those leaving prison, hospital or care who often have other vulnerabilities including drug and/ or alcohol addiction, anger management, learning disability, mental health issues, etc.
5. Young People are of particular interest and we are trying to look at how we can operate a rapid response service jointly with social services either early intervention team or adolescent team to make the maximum joint effort to keep a young person at home and put in the relevant support to sustain them at home.
6. We need to develop further our links with health and work more effectively both in relation to preventing clients from becoming homeless and also if they become homeless and we need clear communication networks to achieve this.

Flowchart depicting the process of a homelessness application:

