

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET EXECUTIVE

Date March 8th, 2022

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Myfanwy Alexander
Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Welsh Language,
Housing and Climate Change

REPORT TITLE Powys Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy
2022-2026

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request Cabinet approval for the adoption of Powys County Council's Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy 2022-2026, as the key strategic framework for delivering the Council's Housing priorities and Homelessness prevention objectives in Powys.
- 1.2 The HSP Strategy provides a strategic overview of the Council's approach to homelessness prevention and housing support services. It includes both statutory homelessness functions, funded through the Council's General Fund, and non-statutory preventative services funded through Housing Support Grant (HSG), and the roles to be played by the Council and other housing and support providers working in Powys.
- 1.3 Adoption of the HSP Strategy 2022-2026 will make sure that the Council complies with its statutory obligations in respect of homelessness and housing support. It will also underpin the importance of strengthening working relationships between statutory and non-statutory providers of support and accommodation to both prevent and reduce homelessness across Powys.

2. Background

- 2.1 Powys County Council, like all local authorities in Wales, is required to develop a Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy every four years, with a with a mid-point review every two years. The purpose of the strategy, provision for which is included in the Housing Support Grant (HSG) guidelines published by the Welsh Government, is to set out the strategic direction of the Council for providing and enabling housing support services.

- 2.2 This includes, in support of Section 50 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, providing an overarching framework to:
- Prevent homelessness.
 - Make sure that suitable accommodation is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless.
 - Make sure that satisfactory support is available for people who are or may become homeless.
- 2.3 The development of the Powys HSP Strategy has involved close collaboration with Mid and West Wales Regional partners in reviewing regional housing related support strategic objectives. Partner agencies and the Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group (RHSGCG)¹ have agreed to work closely together to develop the Rapid Re-Housing² Homelessness strategy delivery plan due to be completed by September 2022, a tangible outcome from the Powys HSP Strategy.
- 2.4 To develop the Powys HSP strategy, there has been:
- A detailed and thorough consideration of Local Housing Related Support³ strategic objectives.
 - A comprehensive HSG needs assessment and homelessness review, the findings of which included
 - Consideration of the impact of Covid-19, including the ‘Everyone In’⁴ approach mandated by the Welsh Government during the pandemic and now to be mainstreamed as part of the Welsh approach to homelessness
- 2.5 The Council has made sure that the Powys HSP Strategy satisfies the statutory requirements for a homelessness strategy, provided for under Part Two of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. There is no requirement to produce a separate homelessness strategy if the HSP Strategy is compliant with all applicable requirements, set out in law.
- 2.6 The Powys HSP Strategy is attached to this report as Appendix A. The strategy:
- Considers how the Council can move towards the Rapid Re-housing and Housing First⁵ initiatives to enhance the resolution of homelessness.

¹ Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group: Cross regional working group to provide a forum for collaborative working and to improve service delivery.

² Rapid Re-housing: Rapid Rehousing takes a housing led approach to rehousing people that are experiencing homelessness, making sure they reach settled housing as quickly as possible to avoid prolonged stays in temporary accommodation.

³ Local Housing Related Support: Support to help people who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness due to a range of issues or vulnerabilities to access housing and/or maintain their tenancies.

⁴ Everyone In: Welsh Government emergency scheme to help keep rough sleepers off the streets in response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

⁵ Housing First: An approach that focuses on providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, to provide a base from which they can then work to attain their goals and aspirations.

- Clearly references 'Vision 2025', including the Council's commitment to improve the availability of affordable, secure, and sustainable housing.
- Will be supported by the new housing development programme led by Housing Services and the Empty Property Enforcement Action Plan to bring into productive use – including as housing - long term empty properties.
- Is underlined by the Council's Corporate Improvement plan's equality objective that includes: 'helping people to get the support they need to prevent homelessness.'
- Will be supported by, and provides support for, several of the Council's other objectives, including for example the Transformation Pathway to develop housing options for people with special accommodation needs, including young people, those with learning disabilities, people experiencing domestic or sexual abuse and people with disabilities and sensory impairment.
- Satisfies the statutory requirements for a homelessness strategy, as set out in Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

2.7 The four priorities of the Powys HSP Strategy are:

1. All necessary steps are taken to maximise the housing stock available to address homelessness – which includes increasing the net number of affordable, secure homes available for people in Powys, with a particular emphasis on smaller homes for smaller households
2. The homeless persons assessment process is delivered promptly and efficiently, and applicants have their support needs assessed by a multidisciplinary team – which includes developing the Case Management approach to the delivery of homelessness and housing advice, providing stable and well-informed one-on-one support to prevent or resolve homelessness
3. Time spent in temporary accommodation is minimised, whilst ensuring support needs are met – which include developing a Business Case to introduce statutory 24/7 homeless supported/triage accommodation service which will include provision for young people.
4. Powys County Council and its partners commission an appropriate range of support services to ensure that in future homelessness is prevented, or where it occurs it is rare, brief and unrepeatable – which includes further developing joint commissioning approach to optimise impact and use of resources available and build sustainability of providers and Develop links between the (RHSCG) and the Powys Regional Partnership Board and Public Services Board, to embed a cross-service approach to housing support.

2.8 There is a high level of confidence that the priorities detailed in the Powys HSP Strategy, if acted upon, will ensure substantial ongoing improvement in Powys County Council's delivery of homelessness prevention and resolution outcomes.

3. Advice

- 3.1 Based on review of evidence and information from people who use HSG and homelessness services, and other stakeholders, and Welsh Government directives, the most feasible option is for the Council to adopt the Powys HSP Strategy. Failing to adopt the Strategy may put the Council in breach of its statutory obligations and duties in respect of homelessness, including the requirement of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, to have a Homelessness Strategy.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 Adopting the Powys HSP Strategy does not require any commitment at this stage to increase the resources the Council allocates to homelessness activity. However, the strategy includes a wide range of actions, initiatives, and proposals, some of which may need further resources to take forward. In such cases, should additional Council funding be considered beneficial for achieving improved outcomes, bespoke reports will be presented to Cabinet for consideration.
- 4.2 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the comment above and can support the recommendation on that basis.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 The Principal Solicitor for Housing supports this report and its recommendation as it will assist the Council in carrying out its statutory duty regarding Homelessness under the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2014.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: “ I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report”.

6. Data Protection

- 6.1 The proposals and recommendations contained in this report do not involve the processing of personal data.

7. Comment from local member(s)

- 7.1 The adoption of the proposal, as a strategy to improve housing support and reduce homelessness, will impact across all wards in Powys.

8. Integrated Impact Assessment

- 8.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Powys HSP Strategy.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that:

9.1.1 Cabinet adopts the Powys HSP Strategy 2022-2026.

Contact Officer: Zac Matthews
Tel: 01597 827103
Email: zac.matthews@powys.gov.uk

Head of Service: For Housing Services: Nina Davies; for Adult Social Care:

Corporate Director: For Housing Services: Nigel Brinn; for Adult Social Care: