



This is an Open Report

Report to: Environment, Economy, Culture & Housing
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 18 November 2009

Subject: Progress Report on the implementation of the
Homelessness Strategy Action Plan (April-Sept 2009)

Report of: Executive Director of Environmental Services

Contact officer: Steve Sargent 01942 828952

Purpose / summary: To advise members of progress towards the aims and objectives of the Homelessness Strategy action plan achieved in the period April – September 2009

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: n/a

Recommendation / decision: The performance against the Homelessness Strategy be noted.

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	n/a
Staffing:	n/a
Policy:	n/a
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	A full Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment was carried out for the Homelessness Strategy when it was accepted in 2008
Wards affected:	All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

n/a

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary for a progress report, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

A diversity impact assessment is not necessary for a progress report, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?	n/a
Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?	n/a
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	No

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	X		X
Discussion leading to a decision		Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding	X	Information	X

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Committee	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
EECH 18/11/09			

List of Background Papers in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

Title of document	Which meeting did it go to?	Date of meeting	Copy available from?
Progress Report on Homeless Strategy Action Plan November 2009			Steve Sargent 01942 828952

Proper Officer G Bishop

Date 5th November 2009

1. Background:

- 1.1. The Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 "A place for all" was adopted in 2008 to replace the previous strategy "A place for me" which was implemented from 2003 to 2008. The new strategy is more ambitious; it looks to identify the root causes of homelessness and tackle them through targeted intervention rather than simply responding to the needs of people who have already become homeless.
- 1.2. The borough has traditionally struggled with a high level of homelessness in proportion to its population, and some of the challenges faced include:
 - on-going higher than average levels of young people becoming homeless
 - high levels of domestic violence
 - a shortage of supported accommodation for some vulnerable groups
 - a lack of accommodation that can be accessed in an emergency.
- 1.3 This report sets out progress against key performance targets and reports on activity over the past six months. A further update will be presented at the year end which will set out year end performance, but will also look to reset actions and targets in the Action Plan for 2010/11. As a reminder the strategy is implemented and monitored in detail by the Wigan Homelessness Forum which represents a wide cross section of agencies working in this field.

2. Key targets and progress:

- 2.1. Due to the pressures created by the economic recession it has been necessary to devote more resources and attention to this area than ever envisaged within the Homelessness Strategy. This being across all partners including the Council, Wigan and Leigh Housing (WALH) who provide many of the services and other partners such as the CAB. Priorities have been adjusted to ensure that those most affected are helped to the best possible degree. However, this approach seems to be having a positive effect on the key homelessness targets:
 - 50% of homelessness prevented or relieved through positive action (by 2013): *Target reached early; currently 64% of presenting cases prevented from becoming homeless (last year 43.8%)*
 - 50% reduction in use of temporary accommodation (by end of 2010): *Making good progress to reach interim target of 30 cases by end March 2010. (April figure 59 Sept 42)*
 - Cease the use of B&B to accommodate homeless people in all but exceptional circumstances and even then for no longer than 6 weeks (by end 2010):
*Target reached early; no clients places in B&B since July 2009**
** further information obtained after report submitted shows that in fact 29 people were accommodated in B&B July – Sep 2009, but the numbers of such cases have reduced significantly over the last year.*

2.2. The attached appendices outlining both the Action Plan and a detailed explanation of progress during the period April to September 2009 show the following.

Areas of Good Progress

- Increased advice work and measures to reduce repossessions (major reductions achieved)
- Restructured services (mainly in WALH) being more successful in preventing homelessness
- Measures to reduce evictions from rented properties
- Increased targeted interventions for different vulnerable groups
- Measures to make best use of existing housing
- Strengthening partnerships / raising standards

Areas of Limited Progress

The areas of strength dominate progress over the last six months. However limited progress was made within certain preventative work eg peer awareness etc. Work implementing the reactions to the recession were prioritized over this area.

There is also a recognition that there is still much to be achieved and the Council and key partners including WALH are very aware of this. Continued development in terms of the needs of the more marginalised groups, the over representation of young people in homelessness is a cause for concern and there is a continued need for emergency accommodation.

3. Conclusion:

3.1. Taken as a whole the area of homelessness has seen good progress over the last six months with many key Council and WALH targets achieved earlier than expected. Colouring all our efforts in this period is the impact of the global economic recession, which has put additional pressure on homelessness services throughout the country. We are aware that economic recovery from the recession may be slow and that the benefits may take even longer to filter down to the most vulnerable people in our communities. More than ever, it is important that becoming homeless is something that we work together to prevent wherever possible, but if it happens, that the right services are in place to empower people to address their needs and take control of their lives. This approach is no longer simply the duty of the Council / WALH, but of all our housing partners and stakeholders.