1. Introduction

This is a one–year update to the Council’s 2015-18 Homelessness Strategy pending the introduction of a new strategy in spring 2019.

Significant progress has been made by the Council and its partners over the course of the 2015-18 strategy

There are now three organisations delivering services to specific customer segments:

- Single people up to age 25 – St Basils, through the Solihull Youth Hub
- Single people over 25 and rough sleeper outreach – Solihull Integrated Addiction Service (SIAS)
- All other customers – Solihull Community Housing (SCH)

The Solihull Youth Hub was established in April 2017 on a 2-year pilot basis. Led by St Basils and working with Children’s Services, the hub brings together all support required for young people at risk of homelessness.

The youth hub has got off to a strong start, seeing and helping more people than predicted and has achieved some good outcomes. A report on the first full year of operation will be produced by June 2018 and this will be followed by a full evaluation of the hub later in the year.

Solihull Community Housing (SCH) opened in 2017 a new build development of short-term accommodation for single homeless people, and couples without children, at Ipswich Walk, Chelmsley Wood. This provides accommodation with support for up to 31 people at any one time in 21 rooms.

This, along with dedication of council flats and leases of private properties has been an important element of SCH’s success in maintaining and managing a portfolio of temporary accommodation which is sufficiently large and diverse to meet demand without the need to use budget hotels.

Solihull’s outreach service for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping has developed over the past year with Solihull Integrated Addiction Service (SIAS) taking the lead.

The Council and SCH have maintained their commitment to achieving the Gold Standard for homelessness service and have passed 6 of the 10 challenges, with an ambition to complete the whole process by the end of 2018/19.

It is clear that there has been an increasing awareness and concern on behalf of the public and Government on the scale of homelessness and particularly rough sleeping.

The Homelessness Reduction Act requires the services provided by SCH and our other partner agencies to change significantly, with more people being assisted earlier. SCH have led on the implementation of the legislation, working to the accompanying Code of Guidance.
The Homelessness Taskforce which was set up by the West Midlands Mayor is bringing local authorities together and producing new ideas for how homelessness can be prevented and resolved. Chief amongst these is Housing First, which is expected to be introduced during 2018 across the West Midlands.

2. **Aims & Objectives**

Solihull’s Homelessness Strategy retains the overall aim of:

*Preventing homelessness in Solihull and ensuring a quality response to those who do become homeless*

We will retain objectives of the 2015-18 strategy and add to the desired outcomes to reflect legislative and policy changes, notably the Homelessness Reduction Act.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1 – PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION**

**Outcomes:**

- Early identification of vulnerable people / households at risk of homelessness
- Effective and targeted partnership working to enable early intervention and prevention before crisis
- Appropriate information & advice supported by a variety of prevention options
- Wider housing options support (including self-help)

The Homelessness Reduction Act increases expectations of how we provide information and advice that informs people’s choices on how they manage their situations and effective early help for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. To reflect this the following one-year outcomes are added:

- Effective prevention and relief of homelessness through implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act
- Strengthen the working arrangements with internal and external partners to facilitate appropriate referrals through implementing the Duty to Refer

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2 – ADVICE, DECISION MAKING AND SUPPORT**

**Outcomes:**

- Accessible Service (with 24/7 access and effective out of hours arrangements)
- Right decisions on all applications
- Targeted customer pathways for vulnerable groups with the right support and assistance to meet customer needs
- Referral arrangements in place with local partners to meet wider support needs identified
- Integrated multi-agency approach to identify and respond to homeless customers / those at risk of homelessness
- All vulnerable households placed in appropriate temporary accommodation (self or SCH sourced) with support options available to those with wider needs
The new Act enlarges the role of the local authority to provide advice and information about homelessness and its prevention, as well as the help that is available regarding how to access it. Further outcomes to be added:

- Implement Housing First in Solihull (subject to agreement and funding)
- Further develop outreach and support for vulnerable people including rough-sleepers
- Recommission accommodation and support services for single people
- Evaluate the Youth Pathway which is working on a pilot basis till March 2019

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3 – LONG TERM HOUSING OPTIONS**

Outcomes:

- Provide a range of accommodation options to assist in the prevention and relief of homelessness, including improved access to the private rented sector
- On-going support options identified to support vulnerable customers

The draft Homelessness Code was clear on the expectations on local authorities to meet accommodation needs from their own stock and private sources. It is proposed to include the following in the event that a larger proportion of lettings of council stock has to be used to meet statutory obligations on homelessness.

- **ensure adequate supply of permanent and temporary accommodation to meet need**

The updated objectives for 2018/19 were approved by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing on 20 March 2018.

3. **Homelessness Review**

The 2015-18 Homelessness Strategy was founded on a Homelessness Review which was carried out in 2014. This set out detailed information on the number of households seeking assistance, the reasons why they were homeless or threatened with homelessness and the outcomes of our prevention and relief work.

The Review will be updated through 2018-19 as fresh information becomes available, including year–end statistics for 2017/18 and the interim review of the Solihull Youth Hub in summer 2018.

The refreshed Review will then form an important part of the intelligence for development of the new Homelessness Strategy for spring 2019.

4. **Consultation**

A wide range of organisations with an interest in homelessness, housing need and wider support issues are represented on the multi-agency homelessness forum (MAHF) which meets quarterly. As part of this forum partners work together to consider delivery of the homelessness strategy and
action plan and to identify local issues, areas of need and gaps in service provision. Further detail about the remit and membership of MAHF is set out at Appendix A.

Partners which are represented on MAHF have contributed to the development of the Solihull Youth Hub, outreach and support services and the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. They, and others, will be engaged with as we develop the new strategy during 2018/19.

5. Monitoring & Review

Delivery of the objectives set out in this strategy will only be achieved through coordinated action both within the Council and SCH and across the wide range of partner agencies and community and voluntary groups that make up MAHF (see Appendix B).

An action plan for 2018/19 will be agreed, monitored and updated quarterly by MAHF, and appropriate sub groups, who will also be responsible for ensuring the actions and outcomes contained in the action plan are implemented.

Progress reports on the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act will be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing on a six – monthly basis.

7. Finance

The Council will continue to support Solihull Community Housing and other partners to provide high quality services with an emphasis on prevention but also enabling effective relief and support for vulnerable people.

Service Level Agreements will be maintained with SCH, St Basils and SIAS which will ensure that services are maintained.

These partners will also have access to the new Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) through submission of business cases for investment to the Council. The availability of these resources will enable service providers to react quickly to new spending priorities which emerge after implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The Council no longer maintains a centralised Supporting People programme and has transferred reduced SP resources to various parts of the Council. Money for supporting homeless and other vulnerable people will be administered by the Managed Growth Directorate. A review of the services will be conducted early in 2018/19 and this is expected to lead to changes in commissioned services during the year.
8. Development of Strategy

The Council will work with partners through the year to produce a new Strategic Housing Framework by spring 2019.

The work on the SHF will be overseen by Council directors and the Chief Executive of Solihull Community Housing to ensure that all relevant strategic links are made and developed.

The development of a new Homelessness Strategy will take place within this process and to the same timetable.

All members of MAHF and other partners and interests including Solihull’s Health and Wellbeing Board will be engaged with and consulted.

Solihull will continue to be active members of the West Midlands Mayor’s Homelessness Taskforce and it is anticipated that the work of this group will inform our activity this year and our future strategy.

9. Enquiries

The strategy update has been produced by SMBC Managed Growth and Communities Directorate.

To discuss any matters relating to it or on homelessness generally, please contact:

George Daley

gedale@gmail.com

0121 704 8140
The following table sets out the current activities through which the Council and its partners will deliver the strategy. This will be updated to reflect any changes during 2018/19.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Offer</th>
<th>Strategic Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To prevent or to relieve homelessness</td>
<td>Provide advice / assistance, including money advice; mediate / negotiate with landlords and family / friends &amp; bring in help from specialist agencies (e.g. Women’s Aid)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure that those in priority need or potentially vulnerable have somewhere to stay</td>
<td>Applicants to source suitable accommodation where they can / SCH provide / source temp accommodation where required / Enhanced service to those at risk during severe weather</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure suitable homes for those to whom we owe the full duty</td>
<td>Council, housing association or private let / Referrals to specialist accommodation / support, e.g. women’s refuge</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support early intervention by the Council / partners</td>
<td>Assistance to 16/17 yr olds, care leavers and looked – after children; Specialist service for singles age 16-25 - Solihull Youth Hub; Specialist service for singles aged 25 and over – SIAS</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support the Council’s Safeguarding responsibilities</td>
<td>Proactive response to rehousing requirements</td>
<td>1, 2 &amp; 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support the Council’s health and wellbeing priorities</td>
<td>(Re) connection of people to health/other support services</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support the Council’s stronger communities priorities</td>
<td>Meeting local housing needs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support the most vulnerable</td>
<td>Homelessness outreach and support Housing First (from date to be advised)</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To deliver value</td>
<td>Funding spent on preventing homelessness / supporting vulnerable people saves greater outlay later</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solihull’s Multi- Agency Homelessness Forum (MAHF)

MAHF meets quarterly and includes within its remit the following key activities:

- Monitoring progress against individual actions within the action plan & forming smaller working groups to deliver actions where necessary
- Reviewing the overall progress being made in tackling homelessness locally and identifying newly emerging issues
- Reviewing the strategy and action plan where necessary to take account of changing circumstances at the local, regional and national level
- Working with other strategic groups / partnerships where they have a role to play in delivering / addressing key objectives in the strategy
- Reviewing the resources available to deliver the action plan and identifying funding opportunities or working together to pool resources to deliver outcomes for customers

The following organisations are members of MAHF and regularly contribute to meetings / consultations:

- SMBC (Income & Awards, Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, Physical, Mental and Public Health, Neighbourhood Services, Economic Development and Regeneration and Planning & Commissioning)
- Solihull Community Housing
- DWP
- West Midlands Police
- Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Registered Accommodation Providers
- Voluntary & Community Sector (Supporting People Providers, CAB, Solihull Sustain, Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness, Changes UK, Solihull Integrated Addiction Services)
- Providers of accommodation and support / advice services (Home Group, Bromford Housing Association, St Basil’s, West Mercia Housing, Fry Housing, Harden Housing Association)
- Citizens Advice Bureau, Solihull Borough
- Birmingham & Solihull Women’s Aid
- SIAS/Aquarius (current providers of the rough sleeper outreach service)
- National Probation Service
- Staffordshire and West Midlands Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)
- West Midlands Fire Service