

## **Appendix One - Consultation Summary on Wirral's Homelessness Strategy 2013-18**

Wirral's Homelessness Strategy sets out the Council's vision for the way homelessness is addressed and focuses on continuous evaluation and improvement of homelessness services to meet local needs.

Following approval from Wirral Council's Cabinet under delegated authority on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2013, the draft Homelessness Strategy was made available for consultation. The consultation took place between 10<sup>th</sup> May and the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

The questionnaire was placed onto an online survey website and a specific invitation to participate in the consultation was sent to the following stakeholders: internal Council Teams, Senior Council Directors, Councillors, Members of the Strategic Housing Partnership and Members of the Homelessness Forum. The consultation was advertised on the Council's website, in the local press and via social media such as Twitter and Facebook in order that as wide an audience as possible were able to comment on the draft Strategy.

The Questionnaire was made up of four questions, each with an opportunity to provide a detailed response where the respondent felt it appropriate.

In total 25 respondents took part in the consultation although not all responded to every question. Of those:

- 41.2% (7) were service providers
- 41.2% (7) were members of the public
- 11.8% (2) were social landlords
- 5.9% (1) of those who responded was a service user
- The remaining eight did not indicate their interest or role in Homelessness.

### Question 1:

*We think Wirral's vision for addressing homelessness in the borough is **'That no one needs to be homeless and partners will work together to make this a reality'**. To what extent do you agree?*

24 out of 25 consultees responded to the question:

- 95.8% (23) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the vision
- 4.2% (1) disagreed with the vision

Specific comments received for this question noted the scale of the challenge faced in light of Welfare Reform, the difficulties in securing accommodation for more vulnerable people and the fact that there will always be homelessness for one reason or another.

Other comments were more general and included the requirement to tailor provision to address specific need and partnership working

The comments made are already reflected in the draft Homelessness Strategy and therefore no amendments are necessary.

### Question 2:

*Following the outcome of the Homeless Review 2012 and consultation to date, we have identified the following strategic priorities to take forward our Homelessness Strategy Vision. Please tell us how relevant you feel each of the following priorities are to tackling homelessness in Wirral today.*

### **Preventing Homelessness**

23 out of 25 respondents scored this priority for relevance:

- 73.9% (17) who scored this priority for relevance felt that it had high relevance to tackling homelessness in the borough.
- 17.4% (4) felt that preventing homelessness had low relevance to tackling homelessness,
- 8.7% (2) selected neither high nor low relevance,

The comments received regarding low relevance, indicates that one respondent felt it low because they feel that other issues have higher priority (security of tenure and ongoing support needs for tenants with complex needs, both of which are covered in other strategic priorities)

Other comments received were more general.

No further amendments to the Strategy were necessary following these responses as the draft strategy addresses both security of tenure and ongoing support needs for tenants with complex needs within the other three strategic priorities.

### **Strengthening Partnership Working**

22 out of 25 respondents scored this priority for relevance:

- 86.4% (19) respondents felt this had high relevance to tackling homelessness
- 9.1% (2) respondents felt that this priority had low relevance
- 4.5% (1) felt it had neither high nor low relevance

As no comments were received specifically for this priority, no amendments were necessary.

### **Evaluating and realigning homelessness and prevention**

21 out of 25 respondents scored this priority for relevance:

- 71.4% (15) felt this priority had high relevance
- 19.1% (4) considered this priority to have low relevance
- 9.5% (2) felt this had neither high nor low relevance

As no comments were received specifically for this priority, no amendments were necessary

### **Increasing access to the Private Rented Sector**

22 out of 25 respondents rated this priority for relevance:

- 59.1% (13) felt this priority had high relevance
- 18.2% (4) considered this priority to have low relevance
- 22.7% (5) felt this had neither high nor low relevance

Two comments were provided quantifying the responses:

One questioned *the security of the Private Rented Sector and lack of support available for tenants*. The draft strategy recognises that demand for appropriate, affordable housing to meet local need has increased and therefore it is important to develop the private rented sector further as another solution for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Wirral Council has a well established landlord accreditation scheme which ensures accredited properties and landlords meet all required regulations, and the draft strategy is clear that we need to build on and expand the relationships already established with Private Landlords and this is key to developing the use of good quality private rented sector stock over coming years.

In terms of support, the draft strategy is clear that Wirral has already increased and improved the provision of support for households who are vulnerable to homelessness using floating support services, and will ensure the Council continues to take a strategic commissioning approach to homelessness to increase the multi-agency partnership working.

The second comment was a suggestion for an *empty property scheme where the Council takes responsibility for empty properties and manages the rental of them*. The draft Strategic Homeless Action Plan already includes an action to develop a multi-agency approach for bringing empty properties back into use under this Strategic Priority.

No further amendments were necessary following these comments.

### Question 3

*Do you agree the solutions and associated actions in the Strategic Homeless Action Plan will help meet the Strategic Priorities?*

22 out of 25 respondents answered this question:

- 63.6% (14) agreed with this statement.
- 18.2% (4) of those strongly agreed with this question
- 18.2% (4) held no strong opinion.
- 0 respondents disagreed with this question.

Comments received to quantify these results were more general, supporting the draft Strategic Homeless Action Plan, but one comment in particular noted that the draft strategy does not take into account the change in legislation whereby a reduction in Council Tax Support will require a significant contribution for some low income households and therefore may have an impact on homelessness in the borough. Following this comment, the Homelessness Strategy has been amended to reflect the changes from Council Tax Benefit to Council Tax support as part of overall Welfare Benefit Reform.

### Question 4

*Do you feel your organisation has a role to play in addressing any of the solutions and associated actions in the Strategic Homeless Action Plan?*

19 out of 25 respondents answered this question:

- 68.4% (13) felt that their organisation did have a role in addressing solutions and actions
- 31.6% (6) felt that their organisation did not have a role.

Eight respondents quantified their answer with further information on how they see the role of their organisation in addressing homelessness in line with the solutions and actions detailed in the draft Strategic Homeless Action Plan. These organisations have and continue to be key partners working with the Council to address and respond to homelessness and the Council will continue to work closely with them over the coming years as the strategy is progressed.