

**Bridgend County Borough Council**

Proposal to consult on the strategy to tackle homelessness 2019-2023

Consultation document

**Date of issue**: **12 April 2019**

**Action required:** Responses by **24 May 2019**

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**www.bridgend.gov.uk**

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## Overview

This consultation is to invite views on the proposal to implement the Empty Property Strategy 2019-2023

## How to respond

This consultation period will begin on the **12 April 2019** and close the 24 **May 2019.**

You can respond or ask further questions in the following ways;

Tel:(01656) 643 643

Email: emptyproperties@bridgend.gov.uk

Online: www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultation

Post: Housing Strategy, Bridgend County Borough Council, Sunnyside, Bridgend, CF31 4AR.

Alternative formats are also available upon request.

## Data protection

Information provided by you on this form will be used to inform the Empty Property Strategy 2019-2023.

The council will take all reasonable precautions to ensure confidentiality and to comply with data protection legislation. Your information may be shared with the Housing Solutions Team for the purposes of informing the Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022. Your information will be retained in accordance with the council’s Data Retention Policy.

You have a number of rights under data protection legislation. You may also withdraw your consent and ask us to delete your personal information at any time by contacting us. Further information about this is available on our website or you may contact the Data Protection Officer.

If you are dissatisfied with the manner in which we process your personal data then you have the option to make a complaint to the Data Protection Officer and the Information Commissioner’s Office.

## Related documents

For more information on consultations in Bridgend county borough or how to join our Citizens’ Panel.

Visit: www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultation

## Background and information

Homelessness can have a major impact on a person’s and / or their family’s life. It can be detrimental to a person’s health, employment or education and training opportunities.

There are often misconceptions about homelessness. It is not always about rough sleeping and not just about the availability of accommodation. Statutory homelessness includes people living in unsuitable or temporary accommodation.

Additionally, there are often complex reasons for people becoming and remaining homeless. Many people are unable to sustain accommodation because of issues such as mental illness or substance misuse issues. Solutions therefore need to be varied and tailored to individual needs.

Homelessness also has an adverse impact on the economy and increases pressure on public services, including, health, police, education and social services. This is why it is imperative that statutory and non-statutory services, work together to make tackling homelessness a priority.

Housing and support services need to be easily accessible, readily available and designed around and responsive to the needs of the people who use them. The Local Authority needs to work in partnership with citizens to prevent homelessness, empowering people to take steps to resolve their housing issues, to have more choice, make their own decisions and retain control of their lives.

Between July and October 2018 a comprehensive statutory Homelessness review was undertaken for Bridgend County Borough Council. The key messages of this can be found in the Homelessness strategy and in response to this review the council identified what is currently working well and where the council wants to be by 2022. The strategy outlines a number of areas of work that are currently being implemented to accomplish identified aims and objectives by 2022 as well as further work needed to be implemented.

## The proposal

Building upon an existing approach and acknowledging the importance of working cooperatively with service users and external partners, the council has developed a strategy to tackle homelessness in Bridgend County Borough Council which identifies the following aims in order to reinforce its commitment to prevent and relieve homelessness:

1. Improve collaboration between external organisations and the statutory functions within the Local Authority.
2. Improve working arrangements between the Local Authority and Registered Social Landlords (RSL’s) to facilitate co-operation in line with section 95 of the housing (Wales) Act 2014.
3. Improve how people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness access services
4. Improve the accessibility and availability of support and accommodation options for all service users.

The council is committed to work collaboratively on a corporate basis with external partners, and service users, in a responsive, creative and timely manner to prevent and relieve homelessness throughout the county borough, ensuring people can access suitable accommodation, with the support required to meet their needs.

The strategy outlines the current picture of homelessness in the county borough, where Bridgend County Borough Council are now, what Bridgend County Borough Council do well and ultimately a vision for where Bridgend County Borough Council wants to be.

The strategy will be reported on and updated in 4 years to take into account any new information available, any legislative changes or any new aims and objectives identified which may require a further public consultation.

## Why has this proposal been brought forward?

The strategy has been developed to continually improve our housing and homelessness service, to realise our vision for homelessness in the county borough.

It has been developed to outline an approach to deal with the increased presentation of Homelessness at a time of financial constraint:

* Following changes to the welfare benefits system;
* Presentations from people with increasingly complex needs, including mental ill-health, substance misuse,
* and poverty of finance and opportunity.

To has been developed to outline an approach to the forthcoming extensions to duties the Local Authority owe to some people who are found to have made themselves ‘intentionally homeless’ and the possibility of changes to the ‘priority need’ categories for homeless people.

## What are the advantages if the proposal goes ahead?

A more collaborative approach with service users and external partners to prevent and relieve homelessness throughout the county borough, ensuring people can access suitable accommodation, with the support required to meet their needs.

## What are the potential disadvantages if the proposal goes ahead?

* Financial implications for the council from capital schemes
* Negative press coverage

## Impact of the proposals

Impact of the proposals on outcomes (standards & wellbeing).

Impact of the proposals on equalities.

* Improve how people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness access services in a more timely and efficient manner.
* Improve the accessibility and availability of support and accommodation options for all service users.
* Reduce presentations of homelessness and relieve homelessness.
* Prevent deterioration of physical and mental well-being of those at risk or currently presenting as homeless
* Improve collaboration between external organisations to tackle homelessness
* Improve collaboration between the statutory functions within the Local Authority to tackle homelessness.
* Improve working arrangements between the Local Authority and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to facilitate co-operation in line with Section 95 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
* Reduce the negative financial impact homelessness has cross the wider public sector
* Increase staff capacity, allowing for more timely interventions and reducing unnecessary and more costly escalation of issues.

## Risks

* The risks of implementing the proposal are as follows:
  + Unrealistic expectations from service users
  + Insufficient resources to deliver the strategy, both financial and physical.
  + Negative responses from service users who do not wish to be engaged
  + Negative responses from external partners

## Alternatives

## The only alternative is to do nothing which cannot be considered as homelessness is high on the political agenda

## **Land and buildings**

#### There will be no transfer/disposal of land/buildings owned by the Local Authority that may occur due to the proposal.

## Finance

* The financial cost cannot be determined at this stage for future action plans to implement the proposals in this strategy.

## The consultation process

#### 6 week consultation

### Next steps

#### Projected timetable for statutory procedure and proposal implementation (include any proposed interim arrangements)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Date** |
| Response deadline | 24 May 2019 |
| Final report published available at: www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultation | July 2019 |
| Report to Cabinet on the outcomes of the consultation. | July 2019 |

The outcomes of the consultation (which will be incorporated into the proposal where possible) will be reported to the Cabinet of Bridgend County Borough Council.