

STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 5
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Report of the Housing Needs Manager

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DRAFT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2013-2018

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the Draft Homelessness Review and Draft Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The committee are asked to:

1. Note the findings of the Homelessness Review
2. Comment on and agree on the strategic objectives set out in the Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018 and approve the Draft Homelessness Strategy
3. Approve the draft strategy to be taken forward to Cabinet & Full Council for adoption

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 Providing affordable, warm, safe and secure housing is the cornerstone of a strong society, and so the services described within this report are fundamental to the success of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Homelessness Strategy itself supports the whole of the Sustainable Community Strategy, but particularly the priority to Create Strong and Supportive Communities.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The statutory duty to have a Homelessness Strategy

- 4.1.1 In 2002, the Government amended the Homelessness Act 2002 to ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness, in particular by requiring Local Authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy.
- 4.1.2 The Strategy must be based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. It must set out the local authority's plans for preventing homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support is, or will be, available for those who become homeless or are at risk of becoming so.

- 4.1.3 All organisations, whose work can help to prevent homelessness, or meet the needs of homeless people in their district, must be considered in the strategy. Plans for joined up working such as this have a massive impact on reducing those who would otherwise potentially experience the negative aspects of homelessness and risks of becoming homeless.

5. Development of the Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018

5.1 Homelessness Review

The current development of the Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018 has enabled us to commence a review to assess how effective we have been in tackling homelessness and meeting the future needs of households threatened with homelessness and who become homeless. The review will take into consideration the following information:

- Profile of levels of homelessness and homelessness services in Peterborough, both qualitative and quantitative
- National and local policy
- Feedback from focus groups
- The root causes of homelessness locally
- Gaps in, and duplication of, services
- Weaknesses in homelessness policy and procedure
- Analysis of outcomes of the previous Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

The Homelessness Review sets out clear findings of our review of homeless services in Peterborough and feeds directly into the development of the Homelessness Strategy.

5.2 Methodology

We carried out a variety of desktop research on statistics held relating to homelessness, housing advice records and housing need in Peterborough. Data was also collated from social services, national and regional research findings and local voluntary and supporting agencies and on demographics, housing and local incomes.

In order to develop a local profile of homelessness we held 4 focus groups in November 2012 dealing with all aspects of homelessness throughout the city. We approached voluntary and statutory organisations linked to homelessness to participate in the groups.

5.3 Profile of homelessness

- 5.3.1 The Homelessness Act (2002) definition of homelessness remains the same as stated in the Housing Act (1996) which is:

‘Under s.175 a person is homeless he or she has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for his or her occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person will also be homeless if where she or he has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or where he or she has accommodation that is a moveable structure (such as a caravan or house boat) and there is no place where it can be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for him or her to continue to occupy it.’

Peterborough City Council homelessness statistics are based on the monitoring forms that are completed for the DCLG. These are known as P1E's and are based around decisions and priority need. These statistics are limited but do give an insight into issues that are affecting local people and resulting in homelessness.

5.3.2 The table below represents the total number of households making homelessness applications to Peterborough City Council over the last 3 years;

Year	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Total Number of applications	1326	1019	1154	1168

5.3.3 While Peterborough has seen a small increase in the number of homeless applications in 2011/12 and 2012/13 this is in line with the national picture.

5.3.4 The table below represents the total number of acceptances and number of households in temporary accommodation per 1000 by Local Authority

Local Authority	Number of Acceptances	Per 1,000 Population	Number of household temporary accommodation	Per 1,000 Population
Peterborough	70	0.97	74	1.0
Norwich	42	0.68	43	0.69
Ipswich	25	0.45	30	0.55
Cambridge	31	0.69	76	1.69

5.3.5 The percentage of applicants accepted by Peterborough is marginally higher than other regional Local Authorities. The number of households in temporary accommodation during this period was lower than Cambridge.

The table below represents the number of persons accepted as homeless by household type.

	2009-10	2010-2011	2011-12	2012-13
Families	183	65	149	149
Pregnant with no other children	54	26	28	24
Singles and Couples	158	89	99	90
TOTAL	395	180	276	263

- 5.3.6 A large number of homeless applicants to Peterborough City Council are families or households with a pregnant member. The majority of homeless families are households with 1 or 2 children. There is a statutory duty placed on local authorities by the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, to provide suitable temporary accommodation for homeless families if they are homeless and in priority need. The responsibilities outlined under the Children's Act 1989 mean that social services also have a duty to support families in certain situations. Therefore social services also have a crucial role in preventing homelessness and sustaining tenancies.
- 5.3.7 The needs of children must be considered alongside those of the parents in the delivery of services to homeless families. The traumatic effects of upheaval of homelessness on children are considerable. Peterborough City Council has four family hostels, which provide short-term accommodation for families.

5.4 Reasons for Homelessness

The table below demonstrates the main reason for households presenting as homeless during 2012-2013

Reason for homelessness	Number of Households presenting 2012/13
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	181
Other relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate	257
Non-violent relationship breakdown	107
Violent relationship breakdown (partner)	82
Violent relationship breakdown (other)	9
Racially motivated violence	0
Other forms of violence	16
Racially motivated harassment	0
Other harassment	12
Mortgage arrears	16
Rent Arrears (LA)	4
Rent Arrears (RSL)	23
Rent Arrears (Private sector)	70
Termination of AST (Private)	177
Loss of private rented/tied accommodation (other)	6
End of NASS supported accommodation	15
Prison leaver	71
Hospital discharge	12
Leaving LA Care	20
Left HM Forces	5
Other reason	84
TOTAL	1168

5.5 **Housing Advice**

The Housing Needs service delivers a range of services to assist people in need of alternative accommodation or advice on their current accommodation. Advice is free and confidential it is provided to everyone despite their housing tenure. The service can be accessed our services by calling (01733) 864064. Housing Advice is also provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau and Peterborough Streets day centre.

In 2012/13 the Housing Needs team based at the Customer Service Centre, Bayard Place, provided housing and homelessness advice to 22,095 people. The prevention of homelessness is the primary focus for the team. Preventing homelessness is both cost-effective and provides positive outcomes for homeless persons. The service aims to ensure that everyone can access the help that they need, when they need it, and to find sustainable solutions to their housing difficulties. We saw a decrease in homeless presentations to the Local Authority in 2011/12 compared to 2010/11 and this level has been maintained this year.

5.6 **Rough Sleeping**

Peterborough City Council submitted a multi-agency lead Rough Sleeper Estimate to government of 12. This estimate was carried out on 8th November 2012 and reached with the guidance and support of Homeless Link.

The estimate records a single figure for the number of people thought to be rough sleeping in the local authority area on a typical night between 01 October and 30 November 2012. The figure should be as robust as possible and using the guidance provided will help to get the most accurate estimate.

Peterborough City Council employs a Rough Sleeper Outreach Officer to assist individuals who find themselves sleeping rough after losing their accommodation. The Rough Sleeper Outreach officer has made great strides in ensuring that those who hit the streets are assisted before they reach a point where they are entrenched. In 2010, Peterborough was highlighted in the national media as a rough sleeping hotspot, with reported figures in excess of 70 individuals sleeping rough on any one night. Following the set up of a Task and Targeting group and a joint approach this number was quickly reduced with many being assisted to find work and accommodation, or being assisted to return to their country of origin. This work is continuing and we now have a hardcore of long standing rough sleepers in the city, which we are working with to assist them through a personalised approach to leave the streets.

5.7 **Impact of Welfare Reform**

The direct impact of welfare reform and homelessness are currently unknown. Anecdotally there are suggestions that it will lead to increased homelessness as households are unable to afford increased rents created by access bedrooms in their accommodation or reductions in housing benefit. Additionally the introduction of Universal Credit could result many landlords no longer receiving safeguarded payments and in turn lead to rent arrears and eviction.

The multi-agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group has continued to meet and will be key to the development of the new draft Homelessness Strategy. Whilst the Local Authority recognises the need to lead on the draft Homelessness Strategy it also acknowledges that the success of the Strategy will only be achieved through shared ownership and a joint approach.

We acknowledge that in order to provide a cost-effective and responsive service the Housing Needs team cannot achieve this in isolation. We need to continue to deliver our services in partnership with our statutory and voluntary partners including Peterborough Streets, New Haven Night Shelter, Salvation Army, Hope Into Action and the newly established Peterborough Food Bank.

5.8 **The levels of Housing Need**

5.8.1 *The Housing Market Context*

Property prices in Peterborough have steadily risen over recent years and affordability is becoming an increasingly difficult problem in the city for a growing number of people. Whilst the recession has resulted in the recent downturn in the housing market and a small decrease in the selling prices of some properties in Peterborough. This recent fall in house prices is consistent with the national picture.

The cost of home ownership has substantially increased over recent years, resulting in home ownership becoming unaffordable for many households who require housing. A Peterborough resident average weekly income is lower than the national average (£508) and regional average of (£529) at £436. The median selling price for a detached property in Peterborough is £205,000 over 9 times the average income, whilst semi detached properties are over 5.5 times the average.

5.8.2 *Housing need and affordability*

Housing affordability is a key issue within the Peterborough housing market. In 2010 the city council and its partner neighbouring local authorities commissioned a study into local levels of housing need.

This study identified the following;

- 27 per cent of households in Peterborough cannot afford to rent or buy market housing without some form of subsidy. This is compared with 22.6 per cent of households across the sub-region.
- 81 per cent of lone parents in Peterborough are unable to afford market prices or rents without subsidy.
- 38 per cent of single persons are unable to afford market prices or rents without subsidy.
- 37 per cent of single pensioners are unable to afford market prices or rents without subsidy.
- At the current rate of household formation and housing supply, an average of 1,008 households will fall into housing need in Peterborough on an ongoing annual basis
- In rural areas, housing need as a proportion of supply is ten times higher than it is in the urban area of the city

5.8.3 *The demand for social housing*

Following a period of recent consultation it was agreed to amend the Peterborough Homes Allocations policy in order to give realistic expectations to those who apply and ensure that those in the most urgent Housing Needs are considered for the small amount of accommodation, which is made available by the social landlords in the city.

On the 24 March 2013, prior to the implementation of the new policy there were 9738 live

applications on the housing register. Many of which would never be successful in securing an allocation of accommodation. We are still in the process of implementation, but the changes to policy will mean that there is a significant reduction in this number, but it is expected that there will likely be around 4500 – 5000 households who are considered on the housing register to be either living in accommodation, which does not meet their needs because of size, suitability or because of disrepair, or because they are considered to be homeless or threatened with homelessness.

5.9 Housing Supply

5.9.1 Social Housing

Suitable housing is in short supply in the city to those most in need. While social landlords provide affordable good standards of accommodation there is insufficient supply to meet the needs of all. The table below details the levels of housing stock in Peterborough on 21 November 2012.

Housing Association	Total as at Feb 2011	New builds since 1 March 2011	Acquisitions 2011-12	Losses 2011-12	Total stock as at 21 Nov 2012
Accent Nene	1664	25	0	3	1686
Axiom	1313	61	0	10	1364
BPHA	476	55	1	3	529
Cross Keys Homes	9484	145	9	31	9607
Home	435	0	0	0	435
Minster	973	3	0	1	975
Total	14345	289	10	48	14596

Additionally, the local Housing Associations provide low cost homeownership schemes such as shared ownership and Homebuy. The Homebuy scheme is run through Orbit Housing with a number of shared ownership schemes being operated locally by Housing Associations in Peterborough.

5.9.2 Affordable Rent Model

In December 2010, the coalition Government unveiled a wide range of social housing reforms in a consultation paper named 'Local decisions - A fairer future for social housing'. Government has proposed the introduction of a new affordable housing tenure, called 'Affordable Rent'. This was subsequently included in provisions of the Localism Act.

The introduction of 'Affordable Rent' will help housing associations increase the level of revenue available to fund new development, it also abolished the requirement for new tenants living in social housing to be given a tenancy for life. Rents for the new tenure can be set at up to 80 per cent of local market rents for a comparable property.

The Localism Act also placed a new duty on local authorities to produce a 'Strategic Tenure Policy', which sets out the principles by which landlords should apply their new flexibilities.

The Peterborough Strategic Tenancy Policy seeks to ensure that rents remain affordable, that homelessness levels do not increase, that tenancy flexibilities are applied in a sensitive manner,

and that tenant mobility is protected. The policy has been developed within the context of the council's overarching strategic objectives for housing, as set out in the Peterborough Housing Strategy 2011 to 2015.

5.9.3 *Private Sector Accommodation*

The Private Sector housing stock in the city is varied and represents a tremendous asset to the local community but this asset needs substantial targeted investment to ensure that the condition of the stock is raised and maintained to acceptable levels. The 2011 Census showed households renting from a private landlord or letting agency per ward to be an average of 20.5% and was most prevalent in the Central Ward with 38.1% and Northborough was the lowest at 7%.

The demand for affordable rented property in the District is high. In particular the demand for 1 and 2 bedroom properties is very high. Across the Peterborough area the supply of properties is marginally lower than demand. Especially highlighted were 1 and 2 bed properties being in short supply. There are still barriers with regard to landlords accommodating persons in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit), mainly due to the delays in processing of claims, and payments.

Private sector accommodation is anecdotally becoming more expensive due to the higher demand within this sector. Many households who may previously have purchased a property are now renting. These households find themselves with less disposable income to build towards a deposit and therefore are unlikely to be able to purchase a property in the future.

In recent years the Housing Needs Department has had considerable success in encouraging households to access private rented sector accommodation, instead of making a homeless application, temporary accommodation and social housing.

There has been a steady increase in the number of households accessing private sector accommodation through Peterborough City Council's Rent Deposit Scheme and Peterborough Streets Crisis PRS Scheme.

5.9.4 *Rent Deposit Scheme*

The Housing Needs Service based at Bayard Place, Broadway, Peterborough offers a Rent Deposit Scheme which enables persons to access an interest free loan to be used for the up front costs associated with securing a property in the private rented sector. This has created a real opportunity for the prevention and relief of homelessness and also increased access to permanent accommodation. In 2011/2012 a total of 191 households were assisted into private rented sector accommodation with assistance with rent deposit so far this year, since April 2012, we have been able to assist 276 households.

5.9.5 *Peterborough Streets Crisis PRS Scheme*

Peterborough Streets were successful in receiving funding from the Crisis PRS Access Development Programme. This programme funds new community based services that help single people find and sustain good quality accommodation in the private rented sector (PRS). It provides sustainable solutions to single homelessness and enables single persons to resettle in the Private Rented Sector Scheme and enables Peterborough Streets to prevent homelessness. During 2012/13 a total of 21 persons were assisted into accommodation.

5.10 The Way Forward

Peterborough City Council is committed to preventing and relieving homelessness as well as improving partnerships with service providers in all sectors. The Housing Needs Service recognise that in order to provide a cost-effective and responsive service the Housing Needs team cannot achieve this in isolation. We need to continue to deliver our services in partnership with our statutory and voluntary partners.

The multi-agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group will be key to the development of the new draft Homelessness Strategy. Whilst the Local Authority recognises the need to lead on the draft Homelessness Strategy it also acknowledges that the success of the Strategy will only be achieved through shared ownership and a joint approach.

The key findings of this review will be fed into the development of the Draft Homelessness Strategy 2013- 2018.

5.11 Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018

Visions and Strategic Aims

Our Vision is: To prevent and respond to homelessness by ensuring that we provide a range of effective targeted services that respond to our customer needs.

This is our third Homelessness Strategy and sets out the strategic aims for Peterborough City Council and its partners for tackling and preventing homelessness between 2013 and 2018.

The strategy has been developed within the context of national and local issues and identifies four strategic aims that will drive forward the homelessness agenda in the coming years in Peterborough.

The 2002 Homelessness Act placed a duty on local authorities to develop a Homelessness Strategy and to renew this every five years.

The previous Homelessness Strategy published in 2008 made an important contribution to both tackling and preventing homelessness in Peterborough. The strategy built on partnership working whilst maximising homeless prevention opportunities and contributed to an increase in homeless preventions.

The key achievements from the 2008 Strategy include;

- Mortgage Rescue Scheme established and assisted 27 households who would have become homeless without intervention.
- Multi-Agency rough sleeping Task and Targeting Group established in April 2010.
- All homeless persons provided with information on where they can register with a GP.
- Framework established for Unlawful Evictions and 3 successful convictions achieved.
- Rough Sleeper database established with multi-agency viewing rights.
- Tenancy Relations Officer post created and recruited to.
- 210 Temporary Accommodation target action plan created and implemented.
- Notification system established to notify the Local Education Authority (LEA) within 10

- working days when children in temporary accommodation are not attending school.
- Equality Impact Assessment of Housing Options Service undertaken.
- Waiting times reduced by new delivery of Housing Needs Service.
- All homeless persons attending the Housing Needs service are signposted to Peterborough Streets Day Centre and other support services.

This strategy will build on our achievements whilst strengthening our partnerships and seek to address our new challenges.

We have 4 key strategic aims:

Strategic Aim 1 – Preventing and relieving homelessness through a robust partnership approach

We are aware that in order to provide cost-effective and responsive services we cannot work in isolation. We will deliver our services in partnership with our voluntary and statutory sector partners to provide the best possible solutions.

Strategic Aim 2 - Increasing access to safe, warm, healthy & affordable accommodation

We will continue to maximise the opportunities for differing accommodation choices for homeless persons and person threatened with homelessness and continuing to increase the accommodation choices available persons in housing need.

We will continue to develop and deliver a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups that includes support for both clients and landlords. We need to ensure that those most affected by the welfare reforms and pressures caused by increasing demand on the private sector accommodation available locally can be placed into suitable private sector accommodation.

Strategic Aim 3 – Reduce and prevent rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and where people are the most vulnerable. We will continue to build on our partnership approach to reducing and relieving rough sleeping. This work will include projects that will enable the city to deliver the No Second Night Out principles.

Strategic Aim 4 – Promoting settled lifestyles and sustainable communities

Ensuring that homeless households are given the support to resettle within the community and began to thrive through purpose and encouragement.

National Context

There are a number of National strategies and guidance that have helped to shape this Homelessness Strategy these include:

Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness (2012)⁴ sets ten local challenges for housing authorities to ensure that every contact local agencies make with vulnerable people and families really counts to ensure that we prevent households, regardless of household make up from reaching a crisis point where they are faced with homelessness.

Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives (2005)⁵: Homelessness Prevention, reduction in the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, from 2010 B&B no longer suitable for 16/17 year olds.

Sustainable Communities: Homes For All (2005)⁶: Choice Based Lettings schemes in all local authorities in England by 2010.

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM), September 2009

Tackling Homelessness (2006): recognises the role of registered providers of social housing in preventing homelessness through partnership working, sustainable communities, allocation and management policies and better use of existing stock.

No One Left Out: Communities Ending Rough Sleeping (Nov 2008): aimed to end rough sleeping in UK for more than one night by 2012.

No Second Night Out. This government plan sets out six joint commitments to ensure multi agency working to give local people the tools to tackle rough sleeping and put an end to second nights out on the street.

Developing Homelessness Strategies, Specialist Advisors' Local Authority Toolkit, December 2012

On the 8th March 2012 the Welfare Reform Act received Royal Assent. The Act legislates for the biggest changes to the welfare system in over 60 years. Many of these changes will have an impact on homelessness and homelessness prevention;

- 1 **The move towards a Universal Credit** - Direct payments to landlords will cease. This will result in landlords having no guarantee that rent will be paid and will directly impact of the numbers of private sector landlords willing to consider claimants alongside a possible increase in rent arrears that may lead to eviction and homelessness.
- 2 **Restricting payments for people below the age of 35 years old** - Persons under the age of 35 years old will only be able to claim assistance to the level of shared room rate. This will mean that many young people leaving home for the first time will only be able to access shared accommodation. There will be an additional pressure on services working to house single people in the private rented sector as there are issues with supply and quality of this type of accommodation.
- 3 **Capping of total benefit received per household** – The benefits cap will be implemented across the country by October 2013 and will see the total amount of benefit awarded to non working households capped at no more than £26,000 per annum. Larger families may see an unexpected reduction in their income, which in turn will affect their ability to meet their housing costs.
- 4 **Capping of Local Housing Allowance** - Could make households in receipt of benefits less attractive to landlords and could place strain on residents in areas of high rent who may choose to move to places like Peterborough because we are considered more affordable.
- 5 **Linking Housing Benefit entitlements for social housing tenants to the number of bedrooms needed per household for working age persons** - Tenants within the social housing sector who are under occupying their homes will have a reduction applied to their

housing benefit entitlement. Households will have to meet this reduction from their other income. This could lead to an increase in rent arrears, eviction and homelessness.

- 6 **Up-rating Local Housing Allowance in line with the Consumer Price Index instead of the Retail Price Index** - This may mean that benefit claimants entitlement may not increase in line with the average rents in the city therefore reducing the number of affordable properties available in the private rented sector.
- 7 **Ceasing of Council Tax Benefit** - As part of Localism enabling Local Authorities to develop their own discount schemes with protection for pensioners. Leaving some vulnerable groups who have not previously paid any council tax with a bill.

All the above could place additional strain on the Housing Needs Department. whilst households struggle to cope with their income reductions and struggle to meet their housing costs. Additionally, public spending cuts, changes to Housing Allocation to reflect localism, the introduction of affordable rents, new forms of tenure and the impact of un-ring fenced supporting people funding and imminent reductions that this will bring offer further challenges for the delivery of services. We will continue to monitor the impact of these changes through the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group and when necessary update the Strategy to tackle the impacts.

Changes to the homelessness duty – In November 2012, as a result of the Localism Act 2011, the law changed and gave Council's the power to discharge their homelessness duty into suitable accommodation with a private landlord.

However, in order for the offer to be considered suitable the property and landlord must meet certain minimum standards.

The Council must be of the view that the accommodation is in a reasonable physical condition; that the landlord has taken reasonable fire safety precautions; has taken reasonable precautions to prevent the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning in the accommodation; the landlord is a fit and proper person; the property has a valid energy performance certificate (EPC) and gas safety certificate and that the tenancy is for a minimum fixed term of 12 months.

Where applicants become homeless again within two years, the duty will be retained by the original authority.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The strategy will have implications for all sections of society and all wards and parishes of the local authority area.
- 6.2 The Draft Homelessness Strategy will provide the necessary framework for partnership working and the delivery of effective joined up services for homeless persons and persons at risk of homelessness.
- 6.3 Financial Implications: There are no immediate financial implications.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Revision of the Action Plan through the Homeless Strategy Steering Group Focus Groups held in November and December 2012 on the prevention of homelessness, increasing access to accommodation, rough sleeping and promoting settled lifestyles and sustainable communities

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Draft Homelessness Strategy be approved to be taken to Cabinet and Full Council for adoption.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1 Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002)
Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities
Local Authorities' Homelessness Strategies, Evaluation and Good Practice

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Homelessness Review Draft

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan Draft

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