



Homelessness Strategy Consultation

Public Feedback Report

What you said & how we used your views ...

Thank you to those who participated in the Homelessness Strategy consultation and we hope you find the feedback and results of interest.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This consultation was undertaken to help Melton Borough Council develop a new homelessness strategy to help shape how homelessness services will be delivered over the next 5 years, to 2023. The Council is required to undertake a consultation whenever it proposes changes to its homelessness strategy.
- 1.2 The Council is required to consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy. This can include service users and specialist agencies that provide support to homeless people in the district.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The consultation was in the form of an online survey on the Citizen Space based consultation hub. It was developed to;
 - use skip logic to ask different types of respondents different questions
 - to be in keeping with national data collection formats on Homelessness (P1E)
 - include equality monitoring information for general public respondents
- 2.2 The survey asked for views on the main issues identified in the homelessness review and the proposed priorities for the homelessness strategy. Where relevant to the individual respondent it also asked about people individual experiences of homelessness. Organisations who represent, support or work with people who may be homeless or be faced with a homelessness crisis were also asked additional question about their service users experiences of homelessness.
- 2.3 The online consultation was sent directly to over 100 recipients from organisations who represent, support or work with people;
 - with housing issues which may include homelessness;
 - who are hard to reach; or
 - who have protected characteristics.
- 2.4 Two reminders were sent to these consultees, when there was 2 weeks remaining and a second when there was 5 days remaining until the end of the consultation. The full list of organisations consulted is set out in Appendix A.

2.5 The online survey was also promoted as follows;

- Press release to publicise the consultation in general.
- Article added to the tenants' newsletter to promote to those living in Melton Borough Council housing stock.
- Information about and links to the consultation were added to the Council's Choice Based Letting Home page.
- Consultees who were directly contacted were asked to promote the consultation with their service users
- The use of a centralised consultation hub makes people who visit it (e.g. to respond to other consultations) aware of the homelessness consultation.

2.6 The consultation lasted for 6 weeks from the 25th September 2017 to the 6th November 2017.

2.7 To ensure full accessibility to all people alternative formats were also available on request and a hard copy version was available to download from the consultation hub. Individuals who were sent the consultation request via email were also offered a face to face meeting to discuss homelessness or any other housing issues that they or their organisation may have to encourage a response and help to highlight any wider housing issues that may have a bearing on the new homelessness strategy.

3. Survey response

3.1 A total of 12 responses were received;

- 2 from members of the general public
- 7 from people who represent, support or work with people who may be homeless or be faced with a homelessness crisis
- 0 responses from people who have experienced homelessness or been at risk of becoming homeless.
- 3 from 'other' people

4. How the views helped with making decisions & how we used your views

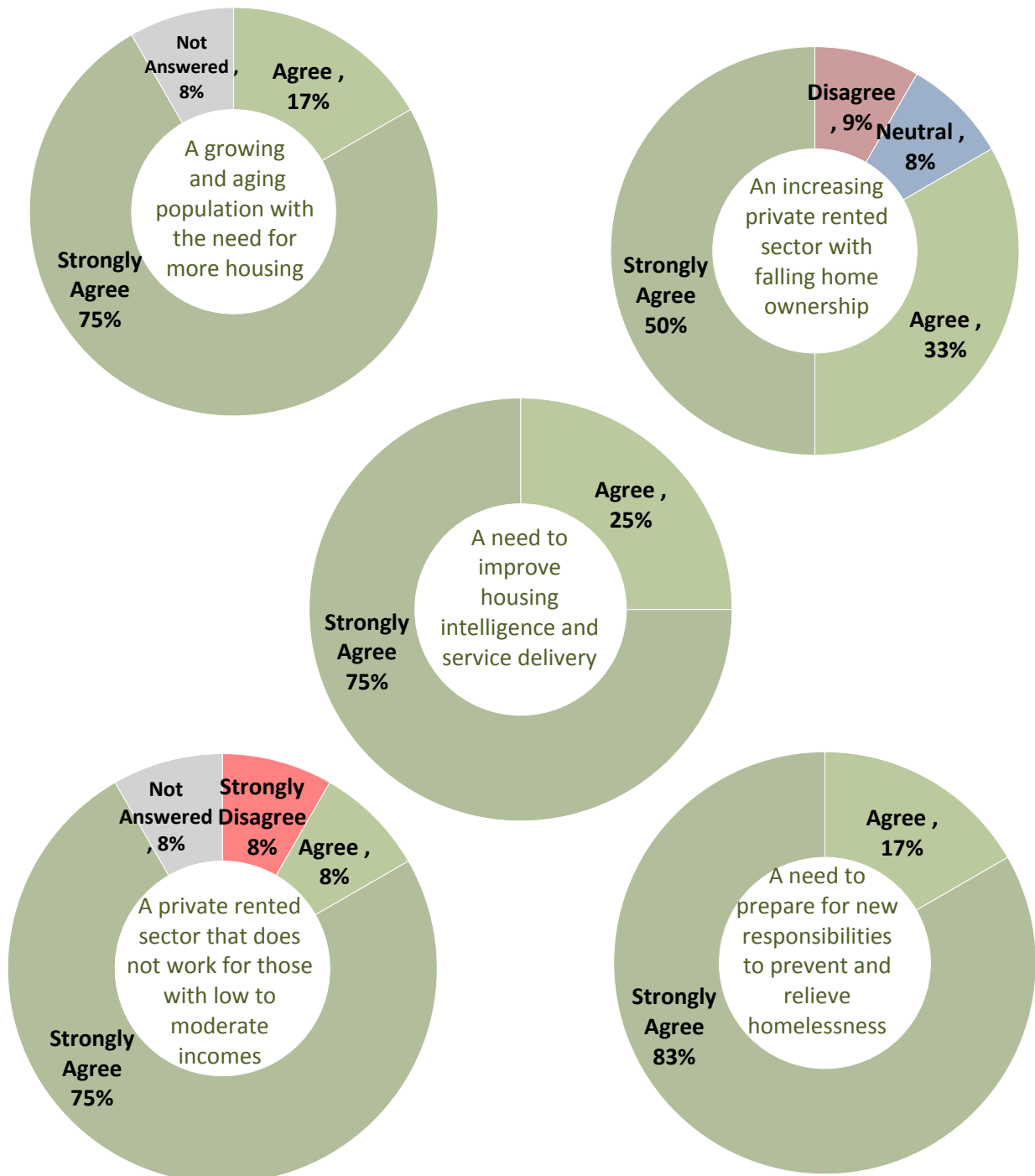
4.1 A report on the consultation responses will be presented to members alongside with the final strategy for approval for publication. It will set out the responses received and how they have been taken into consideration in the final strategy.

5. Survey results

5.1 The overall response rate to the survey was disappointing. Some direct additional contact and discussion with Leicestershire County Council will additionally be required to ensure that the final homelessness strategy is effective at meeting the needs of vulnerable people, including families with children and fulfils our statutory duties.

5.2 There were no responses from people who had experienced homelessness. We have identified from this exercise that more targeted approached to people who have experienced homelessness is needed in the future and this will be taken forward in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.

- 5.3 Below is a summary of the key findings of the consultation in relation to the views of people on the key issues that were identified and the priorities proposed for the new homelessness strategy.
- 5.4 Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the 5 key issues that had been identified. The responses are summarised in the charts below;



“Fewer young people seem to be able to get on the housing ladder. Deposits and rent in advance are barriers to people on a low income wanting to rent privately, UC (universal credit) causing problems with rent arrears in the first long waiting period”

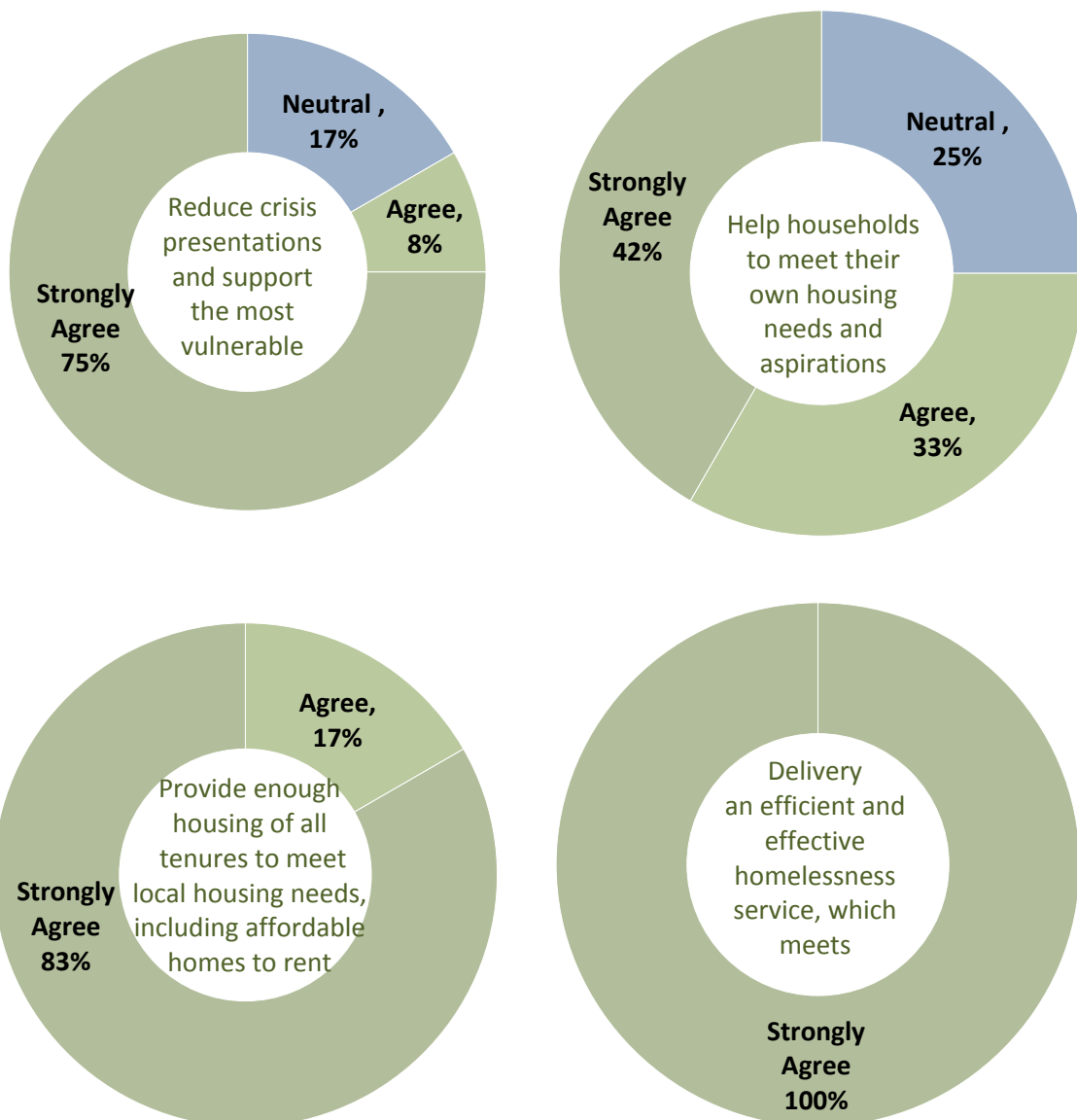
“More social housing is urgently required, both for young and the growing older population. I believe homelessness is a real fear for the growing and aging population. There currently is a need for more housing suitable for the elderly, and supported living accommodation too.. Not everyone has mortgage free property paid off and theirs for life.”

“All are pressing issues”

“The impact of Universal Credit needs to be kept under review”

“I feel housing intelligence should include something around the impact of insecure or no housing upon individuals, their families and ultimately society”.

5.4 Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the draft strategic priorities for the homelessness strategy that had been identified. The results are shown below;



5.5 A selection of the comments we received on the proposed priorities are shown below.

“Yes, supporting the vulnerable should be a priority.”

“There should be more dedicated emergency homeless accommodation in Melton, for all categories”

“some more needy families do not have or understand their own housing aspirations, some families live day-day with no clear plan, goal or aim, I am unsure how this point can be addressed without improved education and wider lifestyle targets”

“I think that this should focus more on prevention and that everyone should be able to access support, not just those that are the most vulnerable, as this will contribute towards prevention and less use of costly services at a later date”

People who work with or support people who are/at risk of becoming homeless

5.6 People who work with or support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless were asked a series of additional questions about their service users. A total of 7 organisations responded to the consultation. They were a mix of organisations, some worked with all people and others supported specific groups of people. They are not necessarily representative of all homelessness in Melton; however they provide insights into the needs of their service users.

Reasons for homelessness

5.7 The main reasons given for homelessness amongst the respondent’s service users were the breakdown of a relationship, both violent and non violent. This was followed by parents who cannot accommodate, rent arrears and the termination of a private sector tenancy

“relationship breakdown is one of the biggest causes of homelessness, whether it be between partners or parent & child.”

5.8 Concerns about impact of welfare reforms was a common theme throughout the survey.

“..the roll out of Universal credit will bring with it issues that are likely to increase debt, money management and overall “tension” within the household.”

Barriers to prevent or relieve homelessness

5.9 The main barrier to prevent or relieve homelessness given was landlord’s not being willing to rent to those in need of housing benefits.

5.10 Unaffordable rents, low incomes, unemployment or need to develop independent living skills, upfront costs to access housing options and being unsuccessful in bidding for a council or housing association home to rent were highlighted by the majority of respondents.

5.11 Debt, benefit or money management advice and help to repair relationships to return home such as family mediation were also highlighted by just under half of the respondents

“many young people find living independently difficult without low level support when in their own property; floating support on a regular basis would help to provide stability.”

Family mediation to try and help rebuild families would be a good service to have in place.”

Actions that could help prevent or relieve homelessness

5.12 Respondents were asked to choose what they felt were the most effective actions that could help their service users to prevent or relieve homelessness. The top three most effective actions were;

- more socially rented (council and housing association) housing
- support with issues not related to housing (e.g. mental health support)
- help with rent arrears

5.13 The following actions were also advocated by at least half of the respondents;

- Independent living skills
- Rent deposit and other landlord incentive schemes
- Debt and money management advice
- Housing benefit advice
- More hostel or other types of temporary accommodation
- Ongoing Tenancy support

5.14 Respondents were also asked to provide more information about Actions that could help prevent or relieve homelessness for their service users;

“... being accommodated in a supportive environment with staff on site can help to bring balance & stability allowing development & growth where issues can be addressed. Following a time of stability families and individuals are better placed to manage a new tenancy successfully”

“There is no hostel accommodation in Melton for single men, often they get asked to go to Leicester which if they are trying to keep good relationships going in Melton, or have children that they want to see locally is not a option for them.”

“Suspension of Universal Credit roll out, suspension of the under 35 LHA rate cap”

“we need to have more availability of local resources to stop people being moved out of a locality they lived in, in particular, supported housing for LD (learning disability) clients”

5.15 The respondents were also asked what was currently working well to help prevent and relieve homelessness for the people they work with or support, a selection of the responses are shown below;

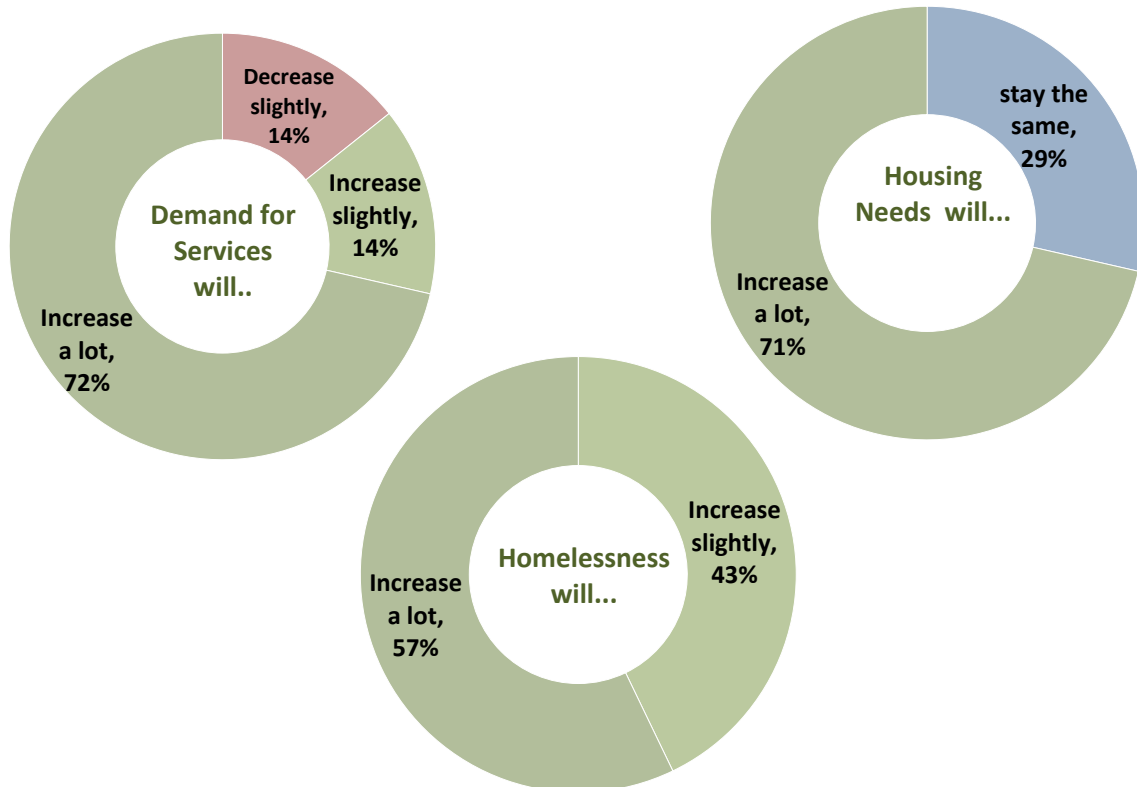
“Encouraging openness and honesty with service users allows for a clear view of the issues which have caused the homelessness. Once the root causes have been identified then actions can be taken to address the problems”

“Tenancy Related Support - which includes holistic support and ensuring that there is partnership working and that specialist services are accessed. People accessing services at the earliest point to ensure prevention, rather than support and advice when at crisis point.”

“Negotiations with housing associations over rent arrears/possession orders”

“Provision of advice and support especially around the areas of Welfare Benefit/Debt/Family and Employment advice”

- 5.16 Respondents were also asked to think about the demands for their services and housing needs and homelessness of their service users over the next 5 years and how they expected it to change.



- 5.17 Only one organisation through that demand for their services might decrease over the next 5 years. They felt that current demand was high as Universal Credit was being rolled out and they were hopeful that it would reduce once but it become established.

“We are hoping that once the universal credit system is properly embedded and people have got used to the payment after the 6-8 week wait with no money that people will be able to keep up with their rent/housing payments with more ease”.

- 5.18 All of the other organisations expected demand for their services to increase, and most expected demand to increase a lot. Most cited changes in the benefits system, unaffordable private rents and a lack of affordable housing as the reason why they expected demand to increase.

“We have seen an increase over time of people wanting to access our services and expect this trend to carry on. Housing needs are changing as it is getting harder to find alternative accommodation due to the lack of social housing and unaffordable private rents - if you can find a landlord to take housing benefit. This means there will be more homelessness as people are unable to access housing suitable to their needs.”

- 5.19 Most thought that overall housing needs would also increase a lot over the next 5 years, although two thought it would remain at current levels. All of the organisations

however expected homelessness specifically to increase over the next five years and most expected it to increase a lot.

“...Housing needs will increase as there is not enough housing stock to accommodate people in affordable housing due to changes in HB and LHA for certain age groups, the benefit cap and it is becoming increasingly harder for those on a low income to access the PRS and it is less secure.”

6. How your views will be used in the future

- 6.1 The Council is committed to carefully retaining customer and stakeholder views and using this information to help inform how it delivers its services now and in the future.
- 6.2 Listening to our customers on a day to day basis via social media, service feedback, compliments and complaints as well as feedback from focus groups and formal consultations provides a wealth of customer opinion. Central collation of this type of intelligence ensures that we don't repeatedly ask the same questions and helps with developing questions, methods of engagement and how to reach groups of people. The information can also be used to help inform how the Council works and uses its resources to best serve the people who live, work, visit and invest in the Borough.
- 6.3 The responses to the consultation have been carefully considered and used to help shape our final Homelessness Strategy. The following proposed changes are proposed to the Homelessness strategy priorities as a consequence to the feedback from the consultation.
 - Change the wording of priority three to better highlight our commitment to the prevention of homelessness for all.
 - Include actions in the homelessness action plan to monitor the impacts of welfare reform and develop actions to help people access and maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness.
 - Include more information on the wider social impacts and costs of homelessness on families and communities in our homelessness review and strategy.

Appendix A: List of Organisations Consulted

- Menphys Special Outreach Services
- Melton Vineyard
- Leicestershire Fawcett Group
- Homefield College (Independent Specialist College/ charity) for learning difficulties
- The Race Equality Centre in Leicester and Leicestershire
- Royal British Legion (Melton)
- Melton Mowbray Shopmobility
- Home Start Leicester, Melton and Rutland
- Melton Baha'i Group
- Age UK Leicester Shire & Rutland (Melton Mowbray)
- Support for Carers Leicestershire
- Access Group (Melton Borough)
- Seniors' Forum
- GATE (Gypsy and Traveller Equality)
- Parish Councils
- Birchwood Special School
- Barnardos Carefree for Young Carers
- Healthwatch
- Melton Mowbray Mencap
- Melton Community Partnership
- Young Leicestershire Youth Clubs (Melton) and Venture House Youth Centre
- Melton Borough Council Tenant liaison officer
- Voluntary Action Leicestershire
- LAMP Leicestershire Action for Mental Health Project
- Bridge House Support
- MYST Lodge (Melton Young Singles Trust)
- Westbourne House (Temporary Accommodation Project)
- Alzheimer's Society Leicestershire & Rutland and Alzheimer's Society Carers support network
- Action In Melton/Independent Voices (Learning disability)
- Melton Adult Learning Disability Team
- Reaching People
- Princes Trust
- Family Voices
- Mosaic: Shaping Disability Services
- Action Deafness
- First Contact
- Action Homeless
- Leicester Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Transgender Centre (LGBT)
- Melton Learning Hub
- CLASP - The Carers Centre
- Shout Out Youth Council
- Melton Armed Forces champion and Shared Armed Forces Officer
- University of the Third Age (Melton)
- Leicester and Leicestershire Faith Leaders Forum; Churches Together (Melton Mowbray); Methodist Church; Welby Lane RC Church; United Reformed Church; Covenant Life Christian Centre; Polish RC Church; Welby Lane Mission Church; Melton Mowbray Baptist Church
- Leicestershire Centre for Integrated Living (LCIL)
- ADHD Solutions
- Polish Club and Polish Club Carer Centre
- Citizens Advice Bureau Leicestershire and Money Advice Service
- J.A.D.A (Journey Away from Domestic Abuse)

- Falcon Centre
- Bridge Housing Support
- The Source
- Leicestershire & Rutland Probation Service
- Leicestershire County Council:
- Adult Social Care - Working Age Adults/Mental Health and Dementia
- Children and Young People Service
- Strengthening Families
- Leicestershire and Rutland Development and Strategy Officers Group
- Registered Housing Providers operating in Melton: EMH Group, Westleigh, NCHA, MUIR Group, Midlands Rural Housing, Waterloo, Advanced Housing, Derwent Living, English Rural Housing Association, Housing 21, PA Housing and the Rural Housing Trust.
- The Homes and Communities Agency
- YMCA
- Leicestershire and Rutland EMMAUS

Appendix B:

Response to Comments received on Key Issues/ Strategy Priorities

Comments on Key Issues	Officer Response
<p>Fewer young people seem to be able to get on the housing ladder. Deposits and rent in advance are barriers to people on a low income wanting to rent privately, UC causing problems with rent arrears in the first long waiting period.</p> <p>More social housing is urgently required, both for young and the growing older population.</p>	<p>Your comments are in line with our findings about local barriers to housing.</p> <p>We will ensure that there is a greater emphasis on monitoring the impacts of universal credit and other welfare reforms through our homelessness action plan, this will help us to support tenants to access and maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness.</p> <p>Our homelessness action plan will look at whether there is more that we can do to help people who are struggling with upfront private rent costs as part of a review of homelessness prevention services we offer.</p> <p>We recognise the need for more social housing and are taking this forward through the Melton Local Plan, which will provide new housing to meet the needs of all sections of our growing and aging population.</p>
<p>I believe homelessness is a real fear for the growing and aging population. There currently is a need for more housing suitable for the elderly, and supported living accommodation too.</p> <p>Locally nothing appears to be done to help the elderly finding themselves in a fix over living accommodation. Not everyone has mortgage free property paid off and theirs for life... There is a robust private hire sector but a diminishing council stock of suitable accommodation for folk in their seventies and older... nothing is out there to suit ageing and ill healthy folk... <i>(note: this comment has been edited to remove any personal information)</i></p>	<p>We recognise the need for more housing, particularly for older people as our population grows and meeting these housing needs is a key priority of the proposed homelessness strategy. The Melton Local Plan is planning to provide sufficient new housing to meet the needs of all sections of our growing and aging population.</p> <p>We acknowledge that not all older people are able to own their own home outright and there will continue to be a need for a variety of housing option for older people across all tenures to meet the needs you describe.</p> <p>We would like to note that Council housing that is designated for older and disabled people is protected from the Right to Buy legislation, so it is not diminishing at the same rate as our other stock, however we need to provide more such accommodation as our population ages.</p> <p>Although homelessness has not been identified as a key issue for older people in Melton currently, we recognise that older people and our aging population have a variety of housing needs and implications for the future which we need to plan for. These needs often include the need for support, adaptations and specialist housing solutions which are seen across all type of households, both owners and renter. We feel it is best to plan to meet the housing needs of older people and our aging population, as part of our wider Housing Strategy which we will develop this year.</p>
<p>I don't understand the other statements so I cannot agree or disagree with them.</p>	<p>We are sorry that you did not understand two of the consultation questions. We take your comments on board and will review the format of our future consultations to help ensure that they are clearer with more information available to help explain individual questions.</p>

Comments on Key Issues	Officer Response
Welfare Reform; Changes to LHA; Changes to HB; Benefit Cap; Less Prevention Services; Less hostel accommodation; PRS is not secure or accessible	<p>Your comments are in line with our findings about local barriers to housing.</p> <p>We will ensure that there is a greater emphasis on monitoring the impacts of universal credit and other welfare reforms through our homelessness action plan, this will help us to support people to access and maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness.</p> <p>We plan to undertake a review of temporary accommodation and prevention services as part of our homelessness action plan.</p>
All are pressing issues. Possibly something about welfare reform - UC, LHA, benefit caps etc.	We will ensure that there is a greater emphasis on monitoring the impacts of universal credit and other welfare reforms through our homelessness action plan, this will help us to support people to access and maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness.
As above, the impact of Universal Credit needs to be kept under review	We will ensure that there is a greater emphasis on monitoring the impacts of universal credit and other welfare reforms through our homelessness action plan, this will help us to support people to access and maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness.
The effect of Universal Credit on arrears and homelessness Problems with individuals raising the deposits required for rented accommodation.	<p>We will ensure that there is a greater emphasis on monitoring the impacts of universal credit and other welfare reforms through our homelessness action plan, this will help us to support people to access and maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness.</p> <p>Our homelessness action plan will look at whether there is more that we can do to help people who are struggling with upfront private rent costs as part of a review of homelessness prevention services we offer.</p>
I feel housing intelligence should include something around the impact of insecure or no housing upon individuals, their families and ultimately society.	We will look at how we can improve monitoring the wider impact of homelessness in future.

Comments on Priorities	Officer Response
Yes, supporting the vulnerable should be a priority. There should be more dedicated emergency homeless accommodation in Melton, for all categories.	The Homelessness Strategy action plan will include a review of temporary accommodation in Melton to ensure it meets the needs for all households.
some more needy families do not have or understand their own housing aspirations, some families live day-day with no clear plan, goal or aim, I am unsure how this point can be addressed without improved education and wider lifestyle targets	We recognise that some vulnerable households will always require support. Addressing the needs of the wider population in terms of education, employment, training and lifestyle factors can help more people live more independent and successful lives. It can help them become more able to meet their own needs and develop aspirations in terms of housing and in general.

Draft Priorities Comments	Officer Response
<p>3 - I think that this should focus more on prevention and that everyone should be able to access support, not just those that are the most vulnerable, as this will contribute towards prevention and less use of costly services at a later date.</p>	<p>We agree that prevention should be a better focus of priority 3. Prevention is better than intervention in a crisis and this is what this priority aims to address and this should apply to all. We will alter the wording of priority 3.</p>
<p>Ensuring that the PRS is more accessible and more secure, addressing the issues with LHA freezes.</p>	<p>The homelessness review identified problems in the PRS as a key issue locally but that there are limits on our ability to control market forces in terms of affordability, security or the frozen LHA. These are nationally set or controlled. However, the homelessness action plan will look at ways we can help to address them at a local level and what we can do to help those for whom the PRS is a suitable and affordable solution.</p>
<p>Please ensure that those single people affected by the change to (what was) Housing Benefit under 35's etc. are catered for</p>	<p>We will ensure that there is a greater emphasis on monitoring the impacts of universal credit and other welfare reforms through our homelessness action plan, this will help us to support people to access and maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness.</p>
<p>Rough sleepers need urgent care provision - ? an overnight hostel?</p>	<p>Melton historically has very low levels of rough sleepers, this does not mean we have no needs, more typically homelessness is more hidden e.g. sofa surfing. We plan to undertake a review of temporary accommodation as part of our homelessness action plan, this will include urgent care provision.</p>
<p>Families and young women seem to get a more sympathetic treatment than young homeless men. Whilst they are a vulnerable group provision for young men is also very important to help reduce problems in the future. Whilst they might not be such a high priority it is important that they are not forgotten</p>	<p>New homelessness responsibilities as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) will expand our duty to help prevent and relieve homelessness for all households, not just the most vulnerable and families with children.</p> <p>We plan to undertake a review of temporary accommodation and prevention services for all households as part of our homelessness action plan.</p>