

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY

Head of Service:	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-27 Appendix 2 Draft Action Plan Appendix 3 Homelessness Review

Summary

This report presents the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan 2022 – 2027 and Homelessness Review and seeks agreement to consult on these documents prior to returning to Committee for approval to adopt.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) To agree that the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Action Plan 2022 – 2027 and Homelessness Review as set out in Appendix 1, 2 and 3 to this report, are submitted to public consultation.

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To ensure the Council has a current Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and Action Plan.

2 Background

- 2.1 As a Housing Authority, the Council is required to publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy based on the results of a review of homelessness within the borough. The strategy must be reviewed at least every five years.

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- 2.2 During the last five years, homelessness across the borough has been affected by a wide range of factors. In April 2018, the government enacted the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) that brought new legislative requirements on local authorities including creating a focus on prevention and relieving homelessness and placing new duties on Housing Authorities to intervene at an earlier stage. Also, to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who were protected under the existing legislation.
- 2.3 The government's Rough Sleeper Strategy was published in August 2018 and made a commitment to halve rough sleeping in the borough by 2022 and end it by 2027. Delivery of this ambitious commitment will require action at both national and local level.
- 2.4 The draft action plan in Appendix 2 includes actions to help support this commitment. In addition, the Council has been successful in bidding for central government funds to deliver initiatives to help accommodate rough sleepers, encouraging them off the streets and into alternative accommodation with appropriate support to prevent a return to rough sleeping.
- 2.5 The introduction of welfare reforms, Brexit, COVID, new domestic abuse legislation and the impact of wider economic factors have all affected the numbers of people presenting as homelessness, at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping. The impact on both workload and council budgets of these reforms has been significant with a large increase in the number of people presenting to the Council as homeless. Some government funding has been made available but this does not cover the true cost of the reforms of the additional responsibilities which fall to the Council. The draft strategy and action plan considers these factors and how the Council might respond to these changes.
- 2.6 Other impacts on homelessness and rough sleeping over the previous 5 years have included COVID (including the "Everyone in" initiative for rough sleepers), BREXIT, welfare reform, as well as wider national economic factors.

3 The homelessness review

- 3.1 The homelessness review is a statutory requirement of all Housing Authorities to inform their strategies and action plans. The review considered a range of information to better understand homelessness and rough sleeping across the borough.
- 3.2 In particular, the review considered
 - Number of homeless approaches
 - Reasons for homelessness
 - Homeless Prevention and Relief cases and outcomes
 - Support needs of homeless households

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- The type of individuals and households becoming homeless
- Households in nightly paid accommodation & in-borough temporary accommodation
- Supply and Demand of Affordable housing - Housing Needs Register and social housing lettings
- Private rented housing & the Rent Deposit Scheme
- Rough Sleeping & Single Homelessness
- The current Housing Options Service & existing homelessness prevention measures

3.3 The key findings from the review are summarised in Appendix 1 and the full Review and the data used in the review in Appendix 3 to this report.

4 Draft strategic objectives

4.1 The Homelessness and rough sleeper strategy sets out 6 key objectives that the action plan is intended to address. These objectives are:

- The early identification, intervention and prevention of homelessness
- Reduce rough sleeping
- Increase accommodation options including social rented, private rented, supported and move on accommodation and in borough temporary accommodation
- Improving the health and wellbeing of homeless people
- Ensuring sufficient support is available for homeless people
- Partnership working

5 Draft action plan

5.1 The strategy includes a detailed action plan structured around the 6 key objectives. The action plan is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

5.2 The actions identified range from the operational and procedural in nature, to more strategic actions such as reviewing the planning policies related to provision of affordable housing, discussions with Homes England (the non-departmental public body that funds new affordable housing in England) as well as a review of all Council owned land for its suitability for bringing forward new affordable homes.

6 Consultation

6.1 Before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy the Council must consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate.

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- 6.2 The Council propose to initiate a 6-week period of consultation on the strategy, action plan and homeless review, including a wide range of stakeholders, residents and service users. The consultation will include the use of social media, focus groups and questionnaires.
- 6.3 Following consultation, the draft strategy and action plan will be reviewed and be brought back to this Committee later this year for consideration, and if agreed, it would then be adopted.

7 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

7.1 Impact Assessment

7.1.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment regarding the post consultation strategy and action plan will accompany the subsequent report to this committee.

7.2 Crime & Disorder

7.2.1 There are no implications arising from this report

7.3 Safeguarding

7.3.1 Meeting housing need, particularly for those who are vulnerable, will have a positive impact on safeguarding.

7.4 Dependencies

7.4.1 The ability of the council to continue provision of homelessness and rough sleeper support will be dependent on continued sufficient funding the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and other government funding opportunities.

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The main source of external funding for our homelessness service comes to the council from the DLUHC in the form of the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG). The HPG for the council in 2021/22 was £472,041. In addition, a further allocation of £98,976 was received as winter top-up funding. The current anticipated spend on homelessness for 2021/22 is expected to be £1.997 million.
- 8.2 In addition to HPG, the Council has successfully bid for additional DLUHC funding to support intervention for rough sleeping and move-on initiatives to reduce the risk of rough sleepers returning to sleeping on the streets.

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- 8.3 The draft strategy and action plan, as set out in the appendices to this report, would seek to minimise future expenditure on the service by increasing the provision of additional accommodation, particularly reducing the reliance on expensive out of borough emergency nightly paid accommodation. Opportunities arising from future announcements from DLUHC for funding will be explored.
- 8.4 The Council has some capital funds and reserves that could be available for investment in initiatives aimed at reducing the costs of homelessness. Uncommitted S106 funds earmarked for affordable housing currently total £1.57 million, and the residential property fund has an uncommitted balance of £965k.
- 8.5 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Homelessness continues to be a challenge for the Council due to the numbers requiring support and the high costs of managing the service. The development of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan will assist in the Council's financial planning and management of the service.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002 local authorities have a strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness. S.1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 (the Act) requires the Local Authority to have a strategy in place to prevent and deal with homelessness and rough sleeping aimed at preventing homelessness in the local authority area and ensure that sufficient room is available for people who are or may become homeless. It is a requirement of the Act that councils prepare a new Homelessness Strategy published every 5 years for their district.
- 9.2 The housing review and this strategy have been produced in accordance with the Homeless Acts 2002 and 2017 (and the accompanying code of guidance and related legislation).
- 9.3 **Legal Officer's comments:** all relevant legal implications have been considered as stated above

10 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 10.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:
- An Effective Council – effective provision of the Council's homelessness and rough sleeper service.
- Safe and Well –Ensuring current housing need is identified and availability of suitable accommodation.
- 10.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

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- 10.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None arising from this report
- 10.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** The strategy and action plan would have a positive impact on community safety.
- 10.5 **Partnerships:** Homelessness and the causes of homelessness requires a genuine partnership approach and the Council works with core agencies such as mental health, social service professionals, Housing Associations, Police and hospitals and the prison and probation service, as well as established and new landlords and estate agencies.

11 Background papers

11.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- None

Other papers:

- Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities (DLUHC)_