

HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

Head of Service:	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision? (yes/no)	
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1: Homelessness Review Appendix 2: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-27 Appendix 3: Action Plan Appendix 4: Summary report on the consultation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Appendix 5: Equality Impact Assessment

Summary

This report outlines the results of the consultation on the draft Homelessness Review, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan and recommends the adoption of Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2027.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Notes the outcome of the consultation with range of stakeholders, service users, staff and residents.**
- (2) Adopt of Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan 2022-27.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

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

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2 Background

2.1 On 17 March 2022 the Community and Wellbeing Committee agreed that the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Action Plan and Homelessness Review were submitted to public consultation. A copy of the Committee report is available as other papers for background information.

2.2 It was agreed, that following the consultation, the draft Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed and be brought back to this Committee for consideration, and if agreed, it would then be adopted.

2.3 Legal background and the purpose of the review and strategy

2.4 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on every local authority to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy, setting out how the local authority intends to tackle and prevent homelessness in their area.

2.5 The strategy must be based on a review of all forms of homelessness within that local authority's area and should be reviewed at least every five years. The purpose of the Homelessness Review is to establish the extent of homelessness in the area, identify future trends and any gaps in the service currently being provided.

2.6 The review should assess the:

- Levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the borough
- Activities that are carried out which prevent homelessness, secure accommodation for homeless people and provide support to people who are or may become homeless
- Resources available to carry out these activities.

2.7 In addition, the Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities sets out some requirements for a Homelessness Strategy. It should:

- Link to the wider contributory factors of homelessness, such as health, wellbeing, employment and economic factors.
- Be consistent with other corporate strategies and objectives.
- Involve partners in implementing the strategic homelessness objectives.
- Have an Action Plan to show how the strategic objectives will be achieved.
- Be monitored and reviewed during the life of the Strategy.

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2.8 In 2018 the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) also published its “Rough Sleeping Strategy” which set out the government’s vision “to support every person who sleeps rough off the streets and into a home”; to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027. It focuses on three key themes: Prevention; Intervention; and Recovery. In 2021 this was further enhanced to include Systems Support to embed change and monitor progress.

2.9 In September 2022, DLUHC published a new cross-government strategy to end rough sleeping called “Ending Rough Sleeping for Good”. The principles of this new strategy are already included with EEBC’s Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy. Any new requirements will be taken into account when developing EEBC’s Ending Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan, which is 2.1 of the Action Plan.

2.10 The Homelessness Review

2.11 In developing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy a detailed review of homelessness in Epsom & Ewell has been undertaken.

2.12 The purpose of the Homelessness Review is to establish the extent of homelessness in the area, identifying future trends and any gaps in the service currently being provided.

2.13 The review has considered a range of information including:

- Number of homeless approaches
- Reasons for homelessness
- Homeless Prevention and Relief cases and outcomes
- Support needs of homeless households
- 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.

2.14 The key findings from the review are summarised in Appendix 2 and the full Review and the data used in the review in Appendix 1 to this report.

2.15 The data within the Homelessness Review will be updated, evaluated and monitored on a regular basis so we are able to predict future trends of homelessness, identify households at risk of homelessness and to inform new service improvements.

2.16 Vision & Summary of the Key Objectives over the next five years.

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- 2.17 This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out how Epsom & Ewell Borough Council intends to meet the needs of our residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including rough sleeping and single people over the next five years. This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
- 2.18 The strategy outlines the Council's strategic vision and the key objectives we aim to achieve when addressing homelessness within the borough. It sets out our commitment to preventing homelessness at an earlier stage and how we will work with our partners across all sectors to develop an integrated approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 2.19 The Council's strategic vision is to see: *"The council and its partners working collaboratively to prevent homelessness, to proactively reduce and end rough sleeping, assist homeless households to find affordable housing solutions and ensure the right support is available to promote recovery and improve health and wellbeing."*
- 2.20 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has identified six key objectives for the next five years and these emphasise the importance of early intervention and prevention as promoted in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Each objective is supported by a number of actions to enable the priorities to be achieved.
- 2.21 These six key objectives are:-
1. The early identification, intervention & prevention of homelessness
 2. Reduce Rough Sleeping
 3. Increase accommodation options including social rented, private rented, supported and move on accommodation and in borough temporary accommodation
 4. Improve the Health & Wellbeing of homeless people
 5. Ensuring sufficient support is available for homeless people
 6. Partnership working
- 2.22 The Action Plan**
- 2.23 Delivery of the Strategy is supported by this Action Plan, which is structured around the six key objectives. The Action Plan is attached as Appendix 3 to this report.
- 2.24 The Action Plan sets out the individual actions and activities to be undertaken and details how the Council will achieve the aims and objectives of the strategy.

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- 2.25 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.
- 2.26 The Strategy and Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis through a multi-agency Homelessness Forum.

3 Public Consultation

- 3.1 The Council carried out six weeks consultation between 12 July and 23 August 2022 with a range of stakeholders, service users, staff and residents. These included: -
- Homeless applicants
 - Residents
 - Staff
 - Housing Association partners including Rosebery, Transform, Mount Green & PA
 - Epsom CAB
 - Epsom Foodbank
 - Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network
 - Adult Social Care, Children Services, Mental Health Service
 - Surrey Adults Matter/Bridge the Gap
 - Drug & Alcohol Services
 - Hospital Discharge Co-ordinator
 - Probation Service
 - North Surrey Domestic Abuse Service
 - DWP/Job Centre +
 - Surrey Life Long Learning Partnership/ETHOS
 - East Surrey Outreach Service
 - Local Faith groups
 - Various community & voluntary sector groups
- 3.2 The consultation took the form of an on-line questionnaire, focus groups and a Member's briefing.
- 3.3 The on-line questionnaire and accompanying strategy documents were emailed to the stakeholders listed above. In addition, 250 homeless applicants on the Housing Need Register were asked to participate. A paper version of the questionnaire was available on request.
- 3.4 The consultation was publicised on; the Council's website; Epsom & Ewell Homechoice; Members update and via social media and a press release.

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- 3.5 Three focus groups were held; one with Housing Services staff on 10 July 2022; one with Rosebery Housing Association on 7 September 2022 and another with the community & voluntary sector on 8 September 2022. A Member's briefing will be held on 24 November 2022.
- 3.6 The on-line questionnaire asked participants for their views on the strategy and whether they thought: -
- The homelessness review identified the key issues
 - The strategic vision and six key objectives are the right ones
 - The Action Plan is focused on the right actions and activities, and explained the work being undertaken across Epsom & Ewell to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 3.7 There was also an opportunity for participants to provide additional information in free text questions.
- 3.8 A summary report on the consultation is attached as Appendix 4.
- 3.9 A summary of the on-line questionnaire responses to each question is outlined below.
- 3.10 The Homelessness Review**
- 3.11 76% of respondents, either agreed or strongly agreed that the Homelessness Review reflected the issues and challenges within the borough of Epsom & Ewell in dealing with homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 3.12 The Strategic Vision**
- 3.13 88% of respondents, either agreed or strongly agreed with the Council's proposed strategic vision for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 3.14 The Six Key Objectives**
- 3.15 **Key Objective 1 - The early identification, intervention & prevention of homelessness:** 81% of respondents, either agreed or strongly agreed with the early identification, intervention & prevention of homelessness being a key objective.
- 3.16 **Key Objective 2 - Reduce Rough Sleeping:** 87.5% of respondents, either agreed or strongly agreed with the key objective of reducing rough sleeping.

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- 3.17 **Key Objective 3 – Increase accommodation options within; Social Rented Housing; Private Rented Accommodation; Supported and move-on Accommodation and Temporary Accommodation within the borough:** 88% of respondents, either agreed or strongly agreed with this key objective.
- 3.18 **Key Objective 4 - Improve the Health & Wellbeing of homeless people:** 87.5% of respondents, either agreed or strongly agreed with the key objective of improving the health & wellbeing of homeless people.
- 3.19 **Key Objective 5 - Ensuring sufficient support is available for homeless people:** 94% of respondents, either agreed or strongly agreed with this key objective.
- 3.20 **Key Objective 6 - Partnership working:** 80% of respondents, either agreed or strongly agreed with the partnership working being a key objective.

3.21 The Action Plan

- 3.22 94% of respondents, either agreed or strongly agreed that the Action Plan is focused on the right actions and activities, and explained the work being undertaken across Epsom & Ewell to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

3.23 Focus Group feedback

- 3.24 Three focus groups were held; one with Housing Services staff on 10 July 2022; one with Rosebery Housing Association on 7 September 2022 and another with the community & voluntary sector on 8 September 2022. A Member's briefing will be held on 24 November 2022.

- 3.25 The strategy and action plan were generally positively received. The focus group with Rosebery Housing Association gave the opportunity to look at common workstreams within the action plan so we could explore joint working to delivery these. The community and voluntary sector found the review data useful in understanding the pressures relating to homelessness in the borough.

- 3.26 Through the use of the Homelessness forum, we will continue to regularly engage with partners and service users during the 5-year life of the Strategy and Action plan.

4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 4.1 Equality Impact Assessment

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4.1.1 Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) have been completed on the strategy and action plan. The full assessment can be found as Appendix 5.

4.2 Crime & Disorder

4.2.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

4.3 Safeguarding

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

4.4 Dependencies

4.4.1 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.

4.4.2 In August 2022 DLUHC undertook a consultation on the future funding for the Homelessness Prevention Grant with the aim of determining new funding allocations formulas. This will apply to grant funding for 2023/24 onwards, with new allocations calculated and announced in late 2022.

4.5 Other

5 Financial Implications

5.1 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 2022/23 was £472,041. For 2023/24 onwards this will be subject to a new funding allocations formula.

5.2 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.

5.3 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.

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5.4 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.

5.5 **Section 151 Officer's comments:**

5.6 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.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 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.

6.2 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).

6.3 **Legal Officer's comments:** Section 3(7A) of the Homelessness Act requires a local housing authority when formulating or modifying a homelessness strategy to have regard to (a) its current allocation scheme under section 166A of the Housing Act 1996 (b) its current tenancy strategy under section 150 of the Localism Act 2011, and in the case of an authority that is a London borough council, the current London housing strategy.

7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

7.1 **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.

7.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

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- 7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None arising from this report
- 7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** The strategy and action plan would have a positive impact on community safety.
- 7.5 **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.

8 Background papers

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

Previous reports:

- Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy - Community and Wellbeing Committee -17 March 2022

Other papers:

- Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities (DLUHC)