

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Environment and Community Panel		
DATE:	15 th October		
TITLE:	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Policy Development		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Housing		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Duncan Hall, Housing Services Manager		
OPEN/EXEMPT	OPEN	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	Yes

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
<p>1. The purpose of this report is to seek the views of panel members on the new draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and for the Panel to make recommendations to Cabinet.</p> <p>2. It is also for the panel to make any comments/ recommendations on the role of the Task Group that was established last year from a decision by the Panel. One of the aspects of its role set out in the terms of reference is to monitor the implementation/ delivery of the Strategy.</p>
KEY ISSUES:
The Council is required to prepare a published strategy on how it will prevent homelessness and rough sleeping in the Borough
RECOMMENDATIONS:
Invite Members to comment and make recommendations on the draft strategy and action plan (to follow).

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

The Panel has in recent years received an annual presentation on the Council's activities in relation to preventing homelessness. The existing Homelessness Strategy needs to be replaced by a plan that reflects recent changes to the legislative framework and local circumstances in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping.

2. Proposal

Homelessness is measured in a number of different ways. Some of the measures including the use of temporary accommodation and the number of rough sleepers have increased in recent years and some new approaches are needed. The Council has a statutory duty to produce a homelessness strategy setting out the issues it faces locally and what it is doing to prevent homelessness. The strategy must include identified actions the Council plans to take to prevent homelessness in future – the proposed strategy looks forward over the next 5 years.

In summary the draft Strategy includes the following components

I. Assessment and analysis of issue of homelessness and rough sleeping

The total numbers of people seeking help with accommodation needs has remained consistent over recent years. The proportion of people that are presenting to the

Council who are homeless that night. There has consequently been an increase in the use of and demand for temporary accommodation.

The 3 most common reasons for people approaching the Council as homeless or threatened with homelessness are:-

1. The ending of a private rented tenancy
2. Family eviction/ exclusion and,
3. Eviction by a social landlord

The underlying causes include critically the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) freeze. LHA is the name for housing benefit that is paid for private renters. It has not kept pace with private rent levels since 2010, and has been frozen since 2016. This has created a gap between housing costs and housing benefit. Young claimants are particularly affected.

Secondly homelessness can be connected with the difficulty some people face in accessing appropriate support or health services - particularly mental health services that can put people at greater risk of losing their accommodation.

Rough sleeping continues to remain high. 97 people used the Winter Night Shelter last winter. It is estimated that between 20-40 people in the area at any one time have no accommodation, and some of these will be sleeping rough or in danger of doing so. The rough sleeper population is mostly male 2/3rds and is characterised by people who have multiple disadvantage, commonly mental health problems and addictions issues.

II. Monitoring and analysis

The new legislative framework that came into effect in 2018 means that we are working with homelessness households for a longer period and focussing more on preventing homelessness. The Council has committed significantly more resources to do this, both human resources and particularly in sophisticated software that helps capture all the data the Council is required to submit to central government each quarter. In the last 12 months a set of new local measures have been developed which will be reported quarterly and published on the Council's web site.

III. Service Gaps

A number of gaps in provision are identified and include:-

- Move on accommodation from hostels/ supported housing and opportunity to utilise government 'Move-on' accommodation grant
- Mental health crisis house provision
- Accommodation for those leaving prison
- Young persons and care leavers
- Range of temporary accommodation offers
- Housing First (supported housing)

IV. Strategic Actions

- Co-ordination role – coordinate new services to ensure best use of resources
- Challenge housing association approaches to assisting Council with homelessness activities
- Monitor impact of new advice services
- Development Policy changes to increase supply of housing including social housing

V. Action planning

The action plan will be reviewed each year, with some activities on-going and sometime limited. The Homelessness and Housing Supply task group to monitor progress against the action plan.

3. Issues for the Panel to Consider

The issues below will be covered in a presentation at the panel meeting:

- The evidence base for the Council's homelessness strategy – homelessness measures and access to data that measures the effectiveness of the Councils interventions
- Key points from the strategy and the link with the Council's Corporate Plan
- The links between Homelessness Strategy objectives and wider objectives in relation to the supply of new housing, including affordable housing and the Local Plan review.
- The new measures of homelessness, reporting arrangements, and relevant web pages
- The implications of the emerging new housing needs assessment
- The impact of newly commissioned independent housing advice and debt services on preventing homelessness

4. Corporate Priorities

The strategy covers a wide range of activities that are all aligned with corporate priorities including the supply of new affordable housing, preventing homelessness, improving the health and well-being and life chances of residents.

5. Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications in relation to the council adopting this strategy. Any financial implication arising from initiatives will be considered on a case by case basis in line with the Council's financial procedures.

6. Any other Implications/Risks

The risks associated with a failure to formulate an effective strategy could lead to increasing levels of homelessness and the associated human costs to families. It also risks taking the wrong decisions with public funds, or misdirecting resources.

7. Equal Opportunity Considerations

There are certain groups that are disproportionately affected by this strategy including those with complex needs. The strategy seeks to address some of the issues that can lead to such groups becoming homeless, or issues that can act as a barrier to accessing accommodation.

8. Environmental Considerations

There are no environmental considerations

9. Consultation

The attached strategy is in draft format and it is intended that consultation with key stakeholder partners is undertaken following the panel meeting. Any changes to the strategy will be made before a final draft is considered by Cabinet/ Council.