

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2027

Report of the Housing and Environmental Health Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

That the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2027 and associated Delivery Plan, shown at Annex 1 and Annex 2 to the report, be approved.

SUMMARY:

- The Homelessness Act 2002 ('the Act') places a duty, on local housing authorities, to undertake periodic reviews of homelessness, and to develop strategies for preventing and tackling homelessness based on the outcomes of those reviews.
- The Act requires the outcomes of homelessness reviews to be made available publicly, and that before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy, the local authority must carry out consultation.
- The Act further requires local housing authorities to publish the resulting homelessness strategies, and that these strategies must be reviewed periodically (but not longer than every 5 years).
- The Council must have regard to its Allocations Policy and its Tenancy Strategy when formulating a new homelessness strategy.
- The Housing and Environmental Health Service completed a comprehensive Evidence Based Review of Homelessness during 2023. This included consultation with stakeholders in the form of surveys and in person forums and consultation with current and recent service users, including those who have a history of experiencing rough sleeping.
- All legal requirements have been met in the context of developing a new strategy for tackling homelessness in the borough, including a robust Equalities Impact Assessment.
- Preventing homelessness must remain a priority issue for Test Valley, this strategy has been developed not only to comply with our legal obligations but to ensure our residents have access to effective and efficient services to enable them to thrive in their communities.
- The Council is committed to preventing and resolving all forms homelessness and the new draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2027 reflects this commitment.
- The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2027 has been developed around four key themes and will be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

1 Introduction

1.1 The recommended Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2027 will deliver initiatives designed to meet locally identified need. It sets out that the Council will:

- Empower and support people to overcome their housing challenges, building on their strengths to secure the right accommodation at the right time and to provide help when needed.
- Work together to maintain strong local partnership connections that contribute to the prevention and relief of homelessness in a holistic and timely way.
- Provide good quality support services and information to communities to enable them to thrive and sustain accommodation.
- Work in collaboration to ensure rough sleeping is prevented wherever possible or to ensure it is rare, brief and non-recurring.

2 Background

2.1 Since the last Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy there have been minor changes to primary legislation and guidance, this has not impacted how we work on a day-to-day basis. However, the biggest impacts have been around national policy and challenges such as; Covid 19 Pandemic, humanitarian responses to provide assistance to those fleeing Afghanistan and Ukraine, as well as the declared Cost of Living Crisis.

2.2 The strategy has been developed considering the national direction of travel and any potential opportunities or pressures that may arise from future changes.

2.3 Tackling homelessness remains part of a constantly moving policy agenda and funding sources, therefore, it is important the plan for delivering the strategy is reviewed and adjusted accordingly to remain up to date.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

3.1 The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed in light of the Corporate Plan 'A Place for Everyone – Supporting Our Communities to Thrive' and with consideration to the outcomes of the extensive consultation undertaken in 2022.

4 Consultations/Communications

4.1 The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been drafted using the results of research, data analysis and a wide range of consultations with staff, service users, elected members and stakeholders.

4.2 This is demonstrated in the Evidence Based Review of Homelessness 2023 (Annex 3).

5 Options

5.1 The options for consideration are:

- 5.2 Option 1 to adopt the proposed Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Guidance.
- 5.3 Option 2 – not to adopt the Strategy and Guidance
- 5.4 Option 3 – to adopt some other iteration of the Strategy and/or Guidance.
- 5.5 In light of the legal requirement, there is no argument for the Council not to adopt a Strategy.

6 Option Appraisal

- 6.1 It is a legal requirement set out in The Homelessness Act 2002 for local housing authorities to publish a strategy, setting out its plans for preventing and tackling homelessness in its borough.
- 6.2 Should the Council fail to develop and publish a homelessness strategy it would be at risk of legal challenge. Dissatisfied applicants could challenge the Council's decision making under the statutory homelessness framework, on the basis it did not have a current homelessness strategy in place.
- 6.3 Failure to publish a homelessness strategy would be at odds with the Council's corporate plan and values. Preventing homelessness within the borough, amongst our residents, is key to achieving the corporate priorities and ensuring our communities can thrive.
- 6.4 The proposed strategy, annexed to this report, has been developed following an in-depth review of homelessness, through evidence that has been developed in partnership, and through detailed analysis. The Review of Homelessness has considered the views of service users, and it has looked at what has been successful and what could be improved in the local network of services.
- 6.5 The proposed Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy draws on the successful growth and developmental work undertaken by the Council's Housing Services and through significant investment in front line service delivery. It meets all legal requirements and represents a best practice strategic plan that will inform the local approach to preventing and relieving homelessness for the next 3 years.
- 6.6 Whilst some local authorities have opted to combine their Preventing Homelessness Strategies within their overarching Housing Strategy, the Homelessness Strategy remains a standalone legal requirement. There is merit to ensuring it stands alone among local policies and plans to ensure that it can be consulted on in a focused way and that homelessness remains a visible high priority, not only for the Council, but for the wider system of public services in the local area.
- 6.7 It is therefore recommended that the proposed Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and associated Delivery Plan are approved. Option 1 above is therefore the recommended option.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 A risk assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's risk management process, 2 amber risks and 1 red risk have been identified.
- 7.2 All risks are outside of the Council's immediate control and relate to:
 - 7.2.1 The future funding decisions that may be taken by DLUHC (amber)
 - 7.2.2 The future funding decisions that may be taken by Hampshire County Council (red)
 - 7.2.3 The potential for economic factors leading to an increased demand on statutory services. (amber)
- 7.3 The plan to deliver the Strategy includes actions to support risk management in this context.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 There are no additional resource requirements arising from the approval of the strategy. All immediate activity set out in the strategy is provided for within existing budgets. Any additional activity identified as part of the Delivery Plan will be considered for feasibility within the normal yearly budgeting activity.
- 8.2 The Housing and Environmental Health Service will continue to seek to make use of central government funding opportunities as they may arise to deliver robust local services that meet identified need.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Council has a range of statutory duties relating to homelessness. The proposed strategy meets all legal requirements as set out in the Homelessness Act 2002, The Housing Act 1996, Part 7, as amended and The Homelessness Reduction Act 2018.

10 Equality Issues

- 10.1 The strategy will impact positively on significant numbers of individuals in housing need by preventing and relieving homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 10.2 An EIA has been completed, no potential for discrimination or adverse impact were identified. All opportunities to promote equality have been taken.

11 Other Issues

- 11.1 Community Safety – the strategy will directly contribute to social cohesion and sustainability.
- 11.2 Environmental Health Issues – the strategy includes actions that will minimise homelessness and experiences of rough sleeping which will in turn have a positive impact on environmental protection services.

- 11.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – this strategy will contribute to the delivery of the overarching Housing Strategy 2020 – 2025, which, includes actions to ensure homes are built to a high standard and are as energy efficient as possible. The plan to deliver the strategy includes actions to review EPC's when assisting applicants into new homes and to work with landlords to ensure their homes are as energy efficient as possible.
- 11.4 Property Issues – the strategy has actions around the Council's use of temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation is provided via our Registered Providers, some of whom lease the Council's own properties for use as temporary accommodation. The Housing Service will liaise with both Registered Providers and Property and Asset Management colleagues on any matters arising.
- 11.5 Wards/Communities Affected – All Wards.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 to 2027 has been carefully developed through an inclusive process to ensure it has, as far as possible, taken into account a range of views and the results of considerable evidence and analysis.
- 12.2 The strategy is a key document that details the Council's priorities for enabling residents to remain in their homes or to help them secure a new one.
- 12.3 The Delivery Plan will directly support the Council to meet the aims of both the Housing Strategy 2020 to 2025 and the aims of its Corporate Plan.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u> Housing Strategy 2020-2025			
<u>Confidentiality</u> It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	3	File Ref:	N/A
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	28 February 2024