

Report to: Full Council

Date of Meeting: 18 December 2019

Report Title: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Report By: Andrew Palmer, Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment

Purpose of Report

To consider and approve the draft homelessness review, and adopt a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Hastings.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. To the draft Homelessness Review and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is adopted and published**
- 2. Delegated authority is given to the Assistant Director, Housing and Built Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing and Leisure, to agree any minor changes to improve the layout and readability of the strategy prior to publication**
- 3. An action plan to implement the strategy priorities is developed with partners**
- 4. An annual performance update is submitted to Cabinet, setting out progress against the strategy priorities and action plan**

Reasons for Recommendations

The council needs to consult on a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy prior to adoption.

Introduction

1. Local authorities are required to have an up to date Homelessness Strategy under the Homelessness Act 2002. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has stated that all local authorities are required to develop new homelessness strategies to take account of the changes introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
2. The council's existing strategy came to an end in 2018, and work has been underway with partners since then to develop priorities for our new strategy.
3. The council has drafted a Homelessness Review (attached at appendix B), which sets out the local and national trends in homelessness, as well as progress that was made under the previous strategy to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

4. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is the first of 3 documents which will make up the Housing Strategy. Similar strategies will be developed to increase the supply of housing and improve the quality of accommodation in the town.
5. The findings of the homelessness review, together with our ongoing work with partners, has informed the priorities for the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
6. The 3 priority areas are:
 - Reduce rough sleeping
 - Minimise our use of emergency accommodation, by improving access to housing solutions
 - Adapt our services to meet local needs
7. Once the strategy has been adopted the Housing and Support Services Group (HASS), which comprises statutory and voluntary sector partners, will develop an action plan to implement the new priorities. HASS will then monitor progress against the action plan throughout the year.
8. Given the high levels of risk and uncertainty in respect of demand for homelessness services, Cabinet will also receive an annual report on progress against our priorities.

Consultation

9. The draft strategy and homelessness review have been developed collaboratively with local partners. The draft strategy and homelessness review were published for public consultation between 27 September and 25 October 2019.
10. Responses were received from council departments, statutory agencies, community sector organisations and members of the public.

11. Key themes from the consultation include:

Encampments – concerns were raised during the consultation regarding unauthorised encampments in the town, linked to the rise in rough sleeping. The council has been working with the highways authority to ensure appropriate support and enforcement action is taken as soon as possible when unauthorised encampments are found. The council will continue this work and identify national examples of good practice as part of its priority to reduce rough sleeping, and improve links between support activities and enforcement services.

Partnership Working – responses from a number of statutory and community sector agencies highlighted partnership work to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping. This will be co-ordinated through HASS, which will develop and implement an action plan to deliver the strategy priorities. The responses also highlighted specific examples of successful partnership working, such as co-commissioned housing and financial advice services.

Supply of accommodation – a consultation response highlighted the importance of bringing empty properties back into use to increase the supply of housing. This will be addressed as part of the council's strategy to increase supply of accommodation, which will be developed in 2020.

Community Safety – consultation responses highlighted the links between homelessness and perceptions of community safety in the town. It also highlighted opportunities to enhance outreach services for rough sleepers and the broader street community partnership, based on national best practice.

Financial Implications

12. The council is heavily reliant on external grant funding to enhance its services for homeless households and rough sleepers. Much of this funding is short term, which creates challenges when developing a strategic approach to this issue. Trends such as the rising use of emergency accommodation also have a significant financial impact on the organisation. The performance monitoring arrangements for the strategy are intended to reflect the funding arrangements for the service and the level of risk the council is facing.

Climate change implications

13. The council will continue to explore opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of its housing stock. Expanding the private sector leasing scheme through the social lettings agency also enables us to link private landlords to schemes to improve the energy efficiency of their properties.

Timetable

14. The timetable below sets out the next steps for implementing the strategy:

Action	Date	Responsible
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy adopted by Full Council	18 December 2019	Strategic Housing and Projects Manager
HASS meets to agree strategy action plan	February 2020	Strategic Housing and Projects Manager

Wards Affected

Insert the list of wards affected

Implications

Relevant project tools applied? Yes

Have you checked this report for plain English and readability? Yes

Climate change implications considered? Yes

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness Yes

Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17) No

Risk Management Yes

Environmental Issues No

Economic/Financial Implications Yes

Human Rights Act Yes

Organisational Consequences Yes

Local People's Views Yes

Anti-Poverty Yes

Additional Information

Appendix A – Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Appendix B - Draft Homelessness Review

Officer to Contact

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