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To: Executive
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Status: Non-Key Decision
Ward(s) Affected: All
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Title: Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

Summary:

The Council's previous Homelessness Strategy was expected to run from 2015 until 2020. However, in August 2018 the Government published a new 'Rough Sleeping Strategy' which sets out its vision to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. It required all local authorities to review their homelessness strategies by the end of 2019 to include a specific focus on addressing rough sleeping. This has provided the Council with an opportunity to refresh our strategy and look for new opportunities to improve our service provision in this area.

Local authorities are also required to publish annual action plans and report on progress. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will consider our strategy to be submitted once it is available on-line. The draft strategy includes a number of key priorities which are supported by a range of actions and recognises the importance of partnership working.

Following approval, the Council will carry out a formal consultation with key stakeholders, members of the public, and partners over an 8 week period. Responses from the consultation will be used to inform and shape the final Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and its future priorities. Executive approval will then be sought on the proposed final strategy before it is adopted.

Recommendations:

That Executive Members:

- (i) **Approve** the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 in order to progress with stakeholder consultations.

- (ii) **Note** that the outcome of the consultation will inform and shape the final Strategy and its future priorities before final approval is sought from the Executive.

Reasons for recommendation:

Approving the draft plan for consultation ensures that the Council is working to the direction of central Government and refreshing our Homelessness Strategy to include rough sleeping. It also provides scope to refresh our strategy in light of the current housing market and socio-economic climate.

1 Introduction and background

1.1 The Council's previous Homelessness Strategy was not due for review until the end of 2020. However, Government have tasked all local authorities to refresh their Homelessness Strategies to include rough sleeping, by the end of 2019. Whilst the Council and its partners have made significant progress in tackling homelessness throughout the lifetime of our last strategy, the landscape we work within has changed and makes this an increasingly difficult task. Economy, austerity and welfare reform, housing supply and affordability all play a significant role in the difficulty faced by local and national agencies in addressing homelessness. We have therefore taken this opportunity to undertake a full review and refresh of the previous plan, expected to become our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.

1.2 Ultimately, this strategy will build on the previous good work the Council has done. It will set out Selby District Council's aim to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping throughout the district over the next five years, understanding that the causes and effects of homelessness are complex and that solutions are often multi-faceted and require multi-agency intervention. This new strategy will therefore present a collaborative approach to tackling homelessness, taking into account recent developments in relevant legislation and policy; most notably the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The strategy will detail how the Council will provide effective and straightforward access to a range of housing services and support for any resident in the district threatened with homelessness or rough sleeping.

1.3 The plan is underpinned by six main objectives and will be supported by a clear Action Plan, monitored internally by relevant Council staff and more widely via the Selby Homelessness Forum. Throughout this time, the strategy shall remain a 'living' document and will be reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis.

2 The Report

2.1 This new strategy has been developed with consideration to a wide range of local and national factors. Throughout England, incidents of homelessness have been increasing for a number of years. Government statistics show that annual homelessness acceptances stood at just over 59,000 in 2017/18, 48% above those seen in 2009/10. This has resulted in a significant increase in temporary accommodation placements (80,720 at the end of 2017/18), up 66%. Public concern resulting from these figures has now risen to such a level that

the current Conservative Government has pledged to halve rough sleeping by 2022, and eliminate it altogether by 2027.

- 2.2** Locally however, statistics show the Council moving in the right direction when dealing with and preventing homelessness. Homeless applications and acceptances have been steadily reducing over recent years and homeless prevention rates have also seen a positive increase. However, when the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 commenced in April 2018, a new data submission process was also introduced which has changed the way we monitor our work in homelessness and prevention. This requires local authorities to submit more detailed case information, with hopes this will provide Government with a better understanding of the customer's journey in order to improve services going forward.
- 2.3** Homelessness is not inevitable and in many cases can be prevented. This is not only best for the customer but often more cost effective for the Council. This Strategy acknowledges the services currently set in place in order to achieve our goals, but also includes an action plan as to how new initiatives and improvements will be brought about over the next five years. Our refreshed priorities are:
- Priority One: Maximise and maintain partnership working to prevent and relieve homelessness.
 - Priority Two: Maximise local and appropriate housing options.
 - Priority Three: Improve access to front-line housing options services to prevent homelessness.
 - Priority Four: Reduce demand for emergency Bed and Breakfast accommodation by offering affordable housing and more appropriate temporary accommodation.
 - Priority Five: Effectively support customers with complex and specific needs.
 - Priority Six: End rough sleeping in the district.
- 2.4** The Strategy also recognises that there are a number of resources available to the Council in order to achieve these priorities. This includes financial assistance schemes, learning and training initiatives (for customer and staff), Government funding and the potential for additional income via funding bids, as well as a dedicated and knowledgeable staffing base; newly welcoming additional staff from the Homeless Prevention Service (most recently provided by Horton Housing). The team are also supported by a full-time Children and Young People's Homeless Prevention Worker, employed by North Yorkshire County Council and working under the Young People's Pathway.
- 2.5** A number of tasks have consequently been identified within the Strategy, which form the corresponding Action Plan. These tasks will need to be completed over the next five years in order to achieve our ambitions, and as identified, a number of these will need to be jointly delivered with our partners in order to ensure the best possible outcomes for our customers. This action plan will be used by the Housing Options team and by Selby's Homelessness Forum to monitor and review progress against key milestones and targets on a regular

basis. Consequently, an annual review of the Action Plan will be completed to ensure our approach remains up to date and that new ways of working are integrated into our plans.

3 Consultation

3.1 We are now in a position to consult our wider stakeholders on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25. We want to speak to tenants, customers of the service and our partner agencies to ensure our plans and priorities are supported by those who matter most to the service. This feedback will then be used to shape and improve the draft as required, securing a shared vision as to how we can tackle homelessness and rough sleeping throughout the Selby district.

3.2 The consultation process will run until the end of March 2020. The outcome of the consultation will shape the final strategy and inform the Equality Impact Assessment that will accompany the final version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

4 Alternative Options Considered

“Do nothing” would put the Council at risk of legal challenge and breach statutory requirements for not developing and adopting a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This is because without a strategy in place, decisions taken relying on the strategy could be open to challenge.

5 Implications

5.1 Legal Implications

- i. Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 (“HA 2002) creates a duty on housing authorities to formulate and publish a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- ii. Section 2 of the HA 2002 requires local housing authorities to review homelessness in their district and to formulate and publish a strategy based on the results of the review. It is accordingly a statutory requirement for the Council to have a published Homelessness Strategy and a failure to do so would present a risk of legal challenge to the Council.
- iii. Section 1(4) HA 2002 requires a new strategy every 5 years. The proposed strategy is for 5 years, and subject to annual review, so is compliant with this requirement.
- iv. Chapter 7 Housing Act 1996 (“HA 1996”) contains a local authority’s statutory homelessness obligations. Sections 1(5) and 1(6) of HA 2002 require housing authorities to take the homelessness strategy into account when exercising their functions.
- v. Section 214A Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) (“HA 1996”) provides that the Secretary of State may from time to time issue codes of practice relating to homelessness or the prevention of homelessness. In accordance with section 182(1) of the HA 1996 Act, local

housing authorities and social services authority are obligated to have regard for the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Homelessness Code of Guidance in exercising their functions relating to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. Failure to have regard to the Code would again potentially give rise to legal challenge to the Strategy.

- vi. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into effect from 3 April 2018 and requires that local housing authorities must take reasonable steps to either maintain or secure accommodation for eligible applicants threatened with homelessness.
- vii. Following the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, a new Code of Guidance was issued by the Secretary of State to include the prevention duties as required by the HRA 2017.
- viii. Chapter 2 of the Code of Guidance relates to homelessness strategies and reviews.
- ix. Clause 2.4 of the Guidance states that the homelessness strategy should take account of the additional duties introduced through HRA 2017. The proposed strategy does so by including prevention as Priority 1 of the action plan.
- x. The Code references Health and Social Care Act 2012 that requires a local authority to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of people in the area, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Code focuses on having a multifaceted approach to homelessness and threatened homelessness with involvement of relevant departments and partner agencies.
- xi. Paragraph 2.10 of the Code states that housing authorities "must" consult public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy. The Council will consult a wide range of consultees in compliance with the requirement under the Code.

5.2 Financial Implications

In addition to the existing budget provided by the Council for the Housing Options Team, delivery of the strategy is dependent upon a range of funding sources.

On announcing the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the government also provided additional funds. This allocation covered 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20; with the Council provided just over £30,000 of 'New Burdens' funding, primarily allocated to additional staffing. The Council also received a Flexible Homelessness Support Grant in 2018/19 of just over £66,000. The grant is to continue for at least a further year (2020/21), with an allocation of £65,000 in 2019/20 and £27,711 provided as a Prevention grant. The Council also continues to receive a small amount of funding from what was

once the Supporting People grant, relating specifically to the support of customers whilst they are placed in our temporary accommodation. This has reduced over the years, and stands at £18,056 for 2019/20.

The Homelessness Prevention Support team transferred to the Council in October 2019 and are funded through a collaboration agreement with NYCC for up to 5 years. The funding allocation for this service in 2019/20 was £61,570.

Current additional resources within the team, most notably staffing, are dependent upon continued financial support from Government. If funding were therefore to cease or reduce significantly, the Council would likely be required to provide a reduced service. This could result in an increase in homeless presentations to the Council and cases taking longer to resolve, having a subsequent impact on the length of time (with associated costs) that individuals and families are placed in temporary accommodation.

5.3 Policy and Risk Implications

N/A

5.4 Corporate Plan Implications

The Strategy supports Priority 1 of the new Corporate Plan “a great place *to live*”. This prioritises the current focus on housing; not only building new homes but ensuring the quality of council homes, neighbourhoods and towns. Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping will also contribute to improving the street environment and community safety objectives.

5.5 Resource Implications

There are no additional resource implications.

5.6 Other Implications

N/A

5.7 Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Screening was completed on 17 September 2019. The outcome of the consultation will inform the Equalities Impact Assessment which will accompany the final version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Where necessary an action plan will be set out to mitigate any adverse impacts identified.

6 Conclusion

The draft Strategy ensures that the Council is working to the direction of central Government and refreshes our Homelessness Strategy to include rough sleeping. Approving this draft for consultation allows us to refresh our Strategy in light of the current housing market and socio-economic climate, and ensure a new plan is in place at the earliest opportunity.

7 Background Documents

Selby District Council’s Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020
MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy August 2018

8 Appendices

Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

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