



Report Reference Number: N/A

To: Leader of the Council
Date: 30 April 2020
Status: Urgent Key Decision
Ward(s) Affected: All
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Title: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

Summary:

The Council's previous Homelessness Strategy ran 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 provided the Council with an opportunity to refresh our strategy and look for new opportunities to improve our service provision in this area.

The proposed strategy includes a number of key priorities which are supported by a range of actions and recognises the importance of partnership working.

Following the approval of the draft strategy on 5th February 2020 a formal consultation with key stakeholders, members of the public, and partners took place. Responses from the consultation were used shape the final Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Executive approval is now sought so the final strategy can be adopted.

Recommendations:

That as the matter is urgent, due to the impact of the Covid-19 Lockdown on decision making processes, the Leader ::

- (i) Approves the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025; and
- (ii) Notes that any Legislative changes as a result of the Governments reaction to Covid-19 which may affect either our strategic homelessness

duty or the delivery of this strategy will be responded to with supplementary homelessness strategy guidance as necessary.

Reasons for recommendation:

The Council has various statutory duties towards the homeless including development and implementation of a Homelessness Strategy and Review. Approval of the Strategy will ensure we continue to meet this duty.

1 Introduction and background

1.1 The Government 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 due to welfare reforms, housing supply and affordability.

1.2 Ultimately, this Strategy sets 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 presents 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 details how the Council will provide 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 is supported by a clear Action Plan, monitored 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 several 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 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 with homeless applications and acceptances steadily reducing and homeless prevention rates increasing. 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, providing the 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 recognises there are a range 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, 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, to be completed over the next five years in order to achieve our ambitions. Some 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.

2.6 In recent work, as part of the response to COVID-19, the Government has launched the 'Everyone In' scheme, whereby local authorities are required to house rough sleepers in hotels or emergency accommodation. In order to safeguard as many homeless people as we possible from COVID-19 their strategy is to bring in those on the streets to protect their health and stop wider transmission and reduce the impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness. The strategy is supported by £3.2 million of initial emergency funding and this funding is available to all local authorities in England and will reimburse them for the cost of providing accommodation and services to rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping. In addition to this the Government

has also introduced a number of schemes intended to support people in the private rented sector, including halting evictions for 3 months.

- 2.7 Approval of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 will support the response to the Covid-19 emergency.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 Consultation on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 was undertaken with tenants, customers of the service and partner agencies to ensure our plans and priorities are considered.
- 3.2 The outcome of the consultation has shaped the final strategy and informed the Equality Impact Assessment that accompanies this final version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 To “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

Legal Implications

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 Section 1(4) HA 2002 requires a new strategy every 5 years. The Council’s Strategy is for 5 years, and subject to annual review, so is compliant with this requirement.
- 5.4 Chapter 7 Housing Act 1996 (“HA 1996”) contains a local authority’s statutory homelessness obligations. Sections 1(5) and 1(6) of HA 2002 requires housing authorities to take the homelessness strategy into account when exercising their functions.
- 5.5 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.

- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 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. Chapter 2 of the Code of Guidance relates to homelessness strategies and reviews. Clause 2.4 of the Guidance states that the homelessness strategy should take account of the additional duties introduced through HRA 2017. The Councils Strategy does so by including prevention as Priority 1 of the action plan.
- 5.8 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. 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.
- 5.9 As the decision is an urgent key decision, the Chair of Scrutiny Committee must be consulted to confirm urgency, and the Chief Executive confirm that the decision is reasonable and urgent. This is to comply with the Council’s Executive Procedure Rules.

Financial Implications

- 5.9 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.
- 5.10 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 and 2019/20 of £65,000 per annum. The grant is to continue for at least another year and in 2020/21 Selby will also receive an additional £27,711 will be provided as a Prevention grant.
- 5.11 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 is £79,626 in 2020/2021.

5.12 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.

5.13 Policy and Risk Implications

N/A

5.14 Corporate Plan Implications

The Strategy supports Priority 1 of the draft 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.

5.15 Resource Implications

There are no additional resource implications.

5.16 Other Implications

N/A

5.17 Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Screening was completed on 17 September 2019. The outcome of the consultation informed the Equalities Impact Assessment which accompanies the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. There were no adverse impacts identified to mitigate against.

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.

Background Documents

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

Appendices

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025
Consultation Feedback
Equality Impact Assessment

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