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# Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

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**Committee considering report:** Executive on 19 December 2019

**Portfolio Member:** Councillor Hilary Cole

**Date Portfolio Member agreed report:** 5 December 2019

**Report Author:** Neil Coles

**Forward Plan Ref:** EX3832

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To adopt a strategy that sets out how the Council intends to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy attached to this report be adopted.

## 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** The failure to adopt the proposed strategy before the 31/12/19 as required by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) may result in the refusal of on-going funding bids to support the Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway projects.
- The proposed strategy is intended to be delivered within existing resources supplemented by the pressure bid in respect of housing services and rough sleeping for 2020/21 (of £236k).
- 3.2 **Policy:** The proposed strategy links to the emerging Housing Strategy and the Council's adopted rough sleeping plan (Reducing rough sleeping in West Berkshire: a plan to ensure no-one has the need to sleep rough).
- 3.3 **Personnel:** Delivery of the actions set out in the proposed strategy are reliant on current resourcing levels within the Housing Service being supported.
- In the event that further funding opportunities are not successful (e.g. current funding round for the Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway projects) the contingency to deliver the proposed plan has been identified by submitting a pressure bid as per the financial implications mentioned at point 3.1 of this report.
- 3.4 **Legal:** The Council has a statutory obligation to have a homelessness strategy in place, and the adoption of the

proposed strategy satisfies this requirement.

- 3.5 **Risk Management:** Subject to challenge and reputational risk. The adoption of the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be the counter measure to manage and control risks associated with homelessness and rough sleeping in the district.
- 3.6 **Property:** The delivery of elements of the proposed strategy will be reliant on the ability of our Registered Provider partners to secure affordable housing, as well as existing commissioning of accommodation provision, e.g. the single person hostel provision and accessing accommodation in the private rented sector.
- 3.7 **Other:** The delivery plan for the strategy sets out how the Council intends to deliver the priorities identified.

#### 4. Other options considered

- 4.1 The option not to adopt a Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping strategy was dismissed as the adoption of a strategy before 31/12/19 is a requirement of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

## Executive Summary

### 5. Introduction / Background

- 5.1 The Council is required to have in place a homelessness strategy that sets out how it intends to respond to the challenges posed by homelessness and rough sleeping. The Council's current strategy lapsed in 2018, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has stated that it expects all council's to have strategies adopted prior to 31 December 2019.
- 5.2 The Council's previous Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018 lapsed following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 that came into force in April 2018 and fundamentally altered the Council's duties in respect of households threatened with homelessness. Consequently it was important to allow the new legislation to bed in before reviewing the Council's strategic approach in respect of homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 5.3 In developing a homelessness strategy, the Council is required to undertake a review of housing need relating to homelessness and rough sleeping (the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019) that informs the strategy. This is to ensure that each homelessness strategy responds to local need and drivers of homelessness that will differ across the country.
- 5.4 To ensure that the needs analysis and the draft strategy were completed independently, this work was undertaken for the Council by Ridgeway Associates Consulting Ltd who are experts in undertaking this work.
- 5.5 During preparation of both the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 and the draft Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Ridgeway Associates Consulting Ltd consulted with the Homelessness Strategy Group and held meetings with service providers, local voluntary sector partners and service users.
- 5.6 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 (full review as at Appendix D) highlighted the following key points:
  - (1) During 2018/19 1,765 households presented to the Council as being homeless or threatened with homeless;
  - (2) 572 of these households (32%) were owed a housing duty – i.e. the Council was under an obligation to assist with either the prevention or relief of their homelessness;
  - (3) The most common reasons for being threatened with homelessness were the loss of a private rented sector tenancy (23%) and family and friends no longer willing to accommodate (19%);
  - (4) Of those owed a duty the age band for the 'lead' applicant' (i.e. the head of the household) most owed a homelessness duty during 2018/19 was 25-34 year olds (29%) with 10% of those presenting aged over 55;

- (5) Of those single people owed a duty, 44% were women and 37% were male, however of those, 54% of women presented with dependent children compared with 6% of men, and;
- (6) In total, one third of households owed a homelessness duty during 2018/19 contained dependent children.

5.7 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 summarises the key achievements in respect of delivering services for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, including:

- (1) Assisting 68% of homelessness prevention duty cases (158 out of 232 cases) during 2018/19 into long-term accommodation (i.e. 6 months duration or longer);
- (2) Utilising Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to support 33% of households to prevent homelessness;
- (3) Assisting 227 homelessness relief duty cases during 2018/19 with half securing accommodation for 6 months duration or longer, and;
- (4) Assisting a 25% of homelessness relief duty cases in 2018/19 into social housing.

5.8 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019 also highlighted perceived challenges for households who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, including:

- (1) A shortage of accommodation supply, including shared houses and other houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) for single people;
- (2) A lack of suitable move-on accommodation;
- (3) Availability of local temporary accommodation;
- (4) Unaffordable private rented sector including the shortfall between Local Housing Allowance rates and private rents;
- (5) Absence of a compelling private rented sector offer from the Council;
- (6) The impact of Universal Credit, the cap on welfare benefits, and the under-occupancy charge;
- (7) A need to foster greater trust between partner agencies;
- (8) A reluctance among some service users to access the Council's hostel provision;
- (9) Pressure on Council staff resources resulting from the implementation of new obligations by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and;
- (10) The points-based priority system for the Common Housing Register.

## 6. Proposals

- 6.1 The proposed Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy builds on the work that is currently undertaken by the Council and partner agencies to prevent and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping in West Berkshire. The strategy includes a delivery plan that sets out how the Council intends to take action in respect of the priorities identified.
- 6.2 The strategy sets out five priorities for action:
- (1) Enhancing prevention and early intervention;
  - (2) Addressing rough sleeping;
  - (3) Increasing the range of housing options for residents of West Berkshire;
  - (4) Further enhancing partnership working, and;
  - (5) Enhancing communication for all client groups.
- 6.3 Early intervention to prevent homelessness remains a key priority and its importance has been reinforced by the new obligations placed on the Council by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and the strategy sets out a number of key objectives including:
- (1) Reviewing the points-based Common Housing Register to better assist homelessness prevention;
  - (2) Enhancing performance monitoring;
  - (3) Identifying and acting upon triggers that may result in the loss of tenancies, and;
  - (4) Improving our work with customers to increase their ability to meet tenancy affordability criteria.
- 6.4 Addressing rough sleeping is another key priority that is not a new concept, with the Council adopting its rough sleeping plan (Reducing rough sleeping in West Berkshire: A plan to ensure no-one has the need to sleep rough) in September 2019. This linked to the successful bidding for additional funding from MHCLG to address the level of rough sleeping across the district.
- 6.5 The strategy reinforces the priorities and actions set out within the rough sleeping plan as follows:
- (1) Delivering targeted support and accommodation services that meet the needs of rough sleepers;
  - (2) Providing innovative solutions to assist entrenched rough sleepers to leave the streets;
  - (3) Improving health and well-being of rough sleepers;

- (4) Preventing residents at risk of rough sleeping from needing to sleep rough, and;
- (5) Tackling the negative public perceptions surrounding rough sleeping.

6.6 Increasing the range of housing options is essential to enable the prevention and relief of homelessness. The strategy considers the following areas for action:

- (1) Maintaining and expanding the Council-led 'Housing First' project that provides accommodation for rough sleepers with complex needs;
- (2) Decreasing the use of temporary accommodation;
- (3) Increasing the availability of HMO accommodation, including through enforcement action in respect of unlicensed HMOs;
- (4) Reviewing the availability of, and access to supported lodgings;
- (5) Increasing the level of affordable housing stock in both the private rented and social rented sectors;
- (6) Increasing the types of accommodation available to meet customer's needs, including those with complex needs;
- (7) Reviewing resources and priorities to return empty homes back into use;
- (8) Reviewing the delivery of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's sites in line with the Council's Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Show Person Accommodation Assessment 2019.

6.7 The Council and its partners have achieved considerable success in improving partnership working in recent years, however this remains a priority area for continued focus, with the strategy setting out the following objectives:

- (1) Working to make the Homelessness Strategy Group (HSG) more strategic;
- (2) Working across the wider partnership to identify and bid for funding opportunities;
- (3) Engaging with local businesses to develop opportunities to support outcomes (e.g. training, apprenticeship and other employment opportunities);
- (4) Putting an approach in place to support increased multi-agency working;
- (5) Enhancing partnership working within the Council, and;
- (6) Introducing a planned process for move-on accommodation to reduce blocking of supported accommodation.

- 6.8 The provision of relevant and accessible information is central to addressing homelessness and rough sleeping. The strategy sets out key objectives to support this priority, including;
- (1) Improving communication to prevent homelessness through targeted information campaigns and the provision of information packs in accessible formats;
  - (2) Improving accessibility and access to relevant information.

## **7. Conclusions**

- 7.1 The proposed Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is required to be adopted by the Council to meet the requirements set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and failure to adopt a strategy puts the Council at significant reputational risk.
- 7.2 Failure to adopt the strategy by 31 December 2019 may also negatively impact on opportunities to successfully bid for MHCLG funding, and cause additional legal challenges in respect of our services to homeless residents.
- 7.3 The delivery plan within the strategy details how the Council intends to address the priorities identified within the strategy.

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix A – Data Protection Impact Assessment
- 8.2 Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment
- 8.3 Appendix C – Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- 8.4 Appendix D – Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019

## Appendix A

### Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via [dp@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:dp@westberks.gov.uk)

Directorate:	Place
Service:	Development and Planning
Team:	Housing
Lead Officer:	Neil Coles
Title of Project/System:	Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
Date of Assessment:	05 November 2019



**Do you need to do a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?**

	Yes	No
<b>Will you be processing SENSITIVE or “special category” personal data?</b>  Note – sensitive personal data is described as “data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person’s sex life or sexual orientation”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X
<b>Will you be processing data on a large scale?</b>  Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X
<b>Will your project or system have a “social media” dimension?</b>  Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X
<b>Will any decisions be automated?</b>  Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual’s input is “scored” or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any “profiling” of data subjects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X
<b>Will your project/system involve CCTV or monitoring of an area accessible to the public?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X
<b>Will you be using the data you collect to match or cross-reference against another existing set of data?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X
<b>Will you be using any novel, or technologically advanced systems or processes?</b>  Note – this could include biometrics, “internet of things” connectivity or anything that is currently not widely utilised	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X

**If you answer “Yes” to any of the above, you will probably need to complete [Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two](#). If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.**

## Appendix B

### Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act), which states:

- “(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:**
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; this includes the need to:**
    - (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;**
    - (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;**
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.**
- (2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.**
- (3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.”**

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality:

- Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?
- (The relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the impact on them)
- Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?
- Is it a major policy, or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?
- Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?
- Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?
- Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the council?

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

<b>What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:</b>	To adopt a strategy that sets out how the Council intends to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping
<b>Summary of relevant legislation:</b>	N/A
<b>Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's key strategy priorities?</b>	No
<b>Name of assessor:</b>	Neil Coles
<b>Date of assessment:</b>	05 November 2019

<b>Is this a:</b>		<b>Is this:</b>	
<b>Policy</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>New or proposed</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Already exists and is being reviewed</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Function</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Is changing</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Service</b>	<b>No</b>		

<b>1 What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?</b>	
<b>Aims:</b>	To prevent the instances where households are made homeless or are threatened with homelessness
<b>Objectives:</b>	(1) Enhancing prevention and early intervention; (2) Addressing rough sleeping; (3) Increasing the range of housing options for residents of West Berkshire; (4) Further enhancing partnership working, and; (5) Enhancing communication for all client groups.
<b>Outcomes:</b>	Reduction in instances where households are made homeless or are threatened with homelessness
<b>Benefits:</b>	Residents' health and well-being improved through reduces instances of homelessness or being threatened with homelessness.

<b>2 Note which groups may be affected by the proposed decision. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.</b>  (Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race,
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Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	Positive impact	The strategy identifies age groups at particular risk of homelessness to enable actions to be delivered to respond to this risk
Disability	Positive impact	The strategy seeks to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping for all individuals
Gender Reassignment	Positive impact	The strategy seeks to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping for all individuals
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Positive impact	The strategy seeks to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping for all individuals
Pregnancy and Maternity	Positive impact	The strategy seeks to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping for all individuals, and pregnant women are afforded specific priority with homelessness legislation.
Race	Positive impact	The strategy seeks to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping for all individuals
Religion or Belief	Positive impact	The strategy seeks to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping for all individuals
Sex	Positive impact	The strategy seeks to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping for all individuals
Sexual Orientation	Positive impact	The strategy seeks to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping for all individuals
<b>Further Comments relating to the item:</b>		

### 3 Result

**Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?**

**No**

**Please provide an explanation for your answer:**

The proposed strategy impacts positively on all persons at risk of, or threatened with

homelessness and rough sleeping.	
<b>Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Please provide an explanation for your answer:</b> The proposed strategy impacts positively on all persons at risk of, or threatened with homelessness and rough sleeping.	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the [Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template](#).

<b>4 Identify next steps as appropriate:</b>	
<b>Stage Two required</b>	No
<b>Owner of Stage Two assessment:</b>	
<b>Timescale for Stage Two assessment:</b>	

Name: Neil Coles

Date: 05 November 2019

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) ([rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk)), for publication on the WBC website.