



Purpose: For Decision

Committee report

Committee	CABINET
Date	14 NOVEMBER 2019
Title	HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2019-2024
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH AND HOUSING NEEDS.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report seeks approval of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the period 2019-24. This strategy is bold and ambitious with aims to make:
 - Homelessness in all forms will be a rare occurrence: we will provide the right support at the right time, so people can access a home and sustain a home they can call their own.
 - Homelessness will be a brief experience: we will give individuals and families choice and control by systemically improving pathways, support and accommodation options to reduce the trauma associated to homelessness.
 - Homelessness a one-off experience: we will increase access to settled homes.
2. Our strategy aligns with the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018¹, which is organised around three core pillars: prevention, intervention and recovery. Prevention focuses on providing timely support before individuals and households become homeless. Intervention focusses on helping people who are already in crisis to get swift, targeted support. Recovery emphasises how we will support people to find a new home quickly and rebuild their lives via a new "accommodation first" approach, utilising the principles of housing first models.
3. The Cabinet is recommended to approve the Homelessness Strategy 2019-2024, setting out the Council's strategic direction for tackling homelessness,

¹ Government Rough Sleeper strategy accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy>

reducing temporary accommodation and eliminating rough sleeping, as at Appendix A to the report.

BACKGROUND

4. The Homelessness Act 2002 and Parts 6 and 7 of the Housing Act 1996 place a variety of obligations on the Council toward the homeless. These duties include; homeless prevention, housing advice, the provision of temporary accommodation and the provision of permanent accommodation for homeless people who are deemed to be owed a full duty under the legislation. These duties were further enhanced in 2018 through the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (HRA).
5. The HRA has far reaching implications in relation to the Council's approach to preventing and relieving homelessness on the Isle of Wight. Its measures include:-
 - An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone (regardless of priority need) as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
 - A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness (regardless of priority need) and a requirement to provide applicants with housing prevention plans.
 - A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants (regardless of priority need) and a requirement to provide applicants with housing relief plans.
 - A new duty on certain external organisations (including prisons and hospitals) to refer homeless households to the Council.
6. Overall the Act extends the duties of the Council to a much broader group of people than it has historically had a duty to help. This means the Council must redouble its efforts to prevent and relieve homelessness.
7. The legislation also requires Housing Authorities to undertake 'reviews' of homelessness within their areas and to have strategies in place to tackle identified issues. The purpose of these strategies is to outline the ways that councils and their partners work together to prevent homelessness and to provide housing and support for the homeless.
8. The Council's existing Homelessness Strategy concluded in 2013. This strategy therefore provides vital strategic direction for tackling homelessness, reducing temporary accommodation and eliminating rough sleeping. The production of a homelessness strategy is a statutory requirement which has been subsequently reinforced by the homelessness guidance for local authorities issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
9. The Strategy (Appendix A) provides a statistical update with regard to the levels of homelessness on the Isle of Wight. It highlights key challenges and makes recommendations as to how these challenges can be met. An action plan that has been co-produced with partners is included as (appendix 3) in the Strategy.

10. The development of the Strategy has been informed by a recent peer review of homelessness services on the Isle of Wight undertaken by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS). The Council was one of the first local authorities nationally to be reviewed by this service post the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act.
11. This review was undertaken in February 2019. Feedback received was that the Council's approach to homelessness needed further improvements to help modernise and provide the gold standard services we aspire to deliver to our citizens.
12. The strategy should be read within the context of the Council's proposed Housing Strategy 2019-24. This strategy covers a broader range of issues including housing supply, affordable housing delivery and improving housing conditions. The Homelessness Strategy focusses specifically on homelessness.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

13. This strategy contributes to the vision outlined in the Council's corporate plan, which "is for the Isle of Wight to be an inspiring place in which to grow up, work, live and visit". We cannot underestimate just how vital having your own front door is to someone's sense of security, hope and wellbeing.
14. In December 2018 the Secretary of State required that all councils produce a homelessness and rough sleepers' strategy by the winter of 2019. Not to produce such a strategy would make the authority non-compliant with legislation and ministerial guidance, prevent it from achieving a Gold Standard for best practice and may have an adverse impact on future bids for government funding to prevent and tackle homelessness.

CONSULTATION

15. Full consultation was undertaken with stakeholders to support the development of this strategy and action plan between May and October 2019.
16. This has included one to one sessions and task and finish groups with key partners as well as presentations to the local homelessness/ housing forums.
17. Feedback from a range of events was also provided following a schedule of events led by experts from Oxford Brookes University in June 2019.
18. Feedback on the strategy has also been received from officials at the Ministry and Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and discussions have been had with various service managers within the Council.
19. Whilst the majority of feedback was positive, we also need to look at the negative comments so that they may help us review our services appropriately.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

20. To support the implementation of the new legislation the Government recognised that Councils need funding support. A new Flexible Homelessness Grant was announced, and the Council was awarded homelessness grant of £506K in 2017/18, £575K in 2018/19 and a further £446K in 2019/20. This funding is ring -fenced to support homeless prevention activity and primarily being used to cover additional staffing costs and help pay for interventions to prevent homeless. The financial modelling for the available monies has ensured that available funding covers the period of this strategy up to 2023/24. Going forward there is no certainty around the future of Flexible Homelessness Grant. Should this funding end then post 2023/24 the Council may need to reassess its options and consider growth (if required at that point in time) or scale back the level of service provided.
21. A full financial assessment will need to be undertaken alongside the development of the Homelessness Strategy 2019/24. Current spend is currently in line with budget in the current financial year. However, there is a risk to this position, due to the demand led nature of this service. Demand since the implementation of the HRA 2017 has been steadily increasing and is likely to be further exacerbated by ongoing Welfare Reforms and cuts in funding.
22. The primary risks to the homelessness budgets are costs associated to temporary accommodation inclusive of Bed and Breakfast, but there is a recognition that the TA portfolio is due an overall review. The actions that are in place are intended to ensure that the levels of expenditure incurred on temporary accommodation remain within budget going forward into 2019/20 and thereafter. This projection, however, needs to be viewed in the context of the increases in homelessness numbers that are being experienced nationally and there are clear risks to the position that is currently being projected.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

23. There are no direct legal implications arising from the principles of the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. In accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018 it is compliant with the new duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

24. Whilst not a legal requirement, it is still considered best practice to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment which has been carried out during the development of the Strategy (Appendix B). It was assessed that a full Impact Assessment was not required. The provision of services for homeless people will have a positive impact in terms of Equalities and Diversity issues.

OPTIONS

25. Option 1:

To approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024, setting out the Council's strategic direction for tackling homelessness, reducing temporary accommodation and eliminating rough sleeping, as at Appendix A to the report.

26. Option 2:

Not to adopt the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024, as at Appendix A to the report.

RISK MANAGEMENT

27. There is a risk that different elements of the Council have different approaches to accommodation and relevant support services, as well as divergent information on the character and needs of vulnerable client groups. The delivery of this strategy will help manage this risk by co-ordinating and connecting the work of Isle of Wight Council services and wider partners and providers, ensuring a consistent and strategic approach to vulnerable people's accommodation.
28. As with any strategy, there is a risk that strategic direction does not translate into action on the ground. This has been mitigated by the creation of a comprehensive action plan and this will be monitored through the housing governance structures as outlined in Appendix 2 of the Strategy. Annual updates will be presented to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee to give reassurances that the actions are being progressed.

EVALUATION

29. The adoption of a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy ensures there is clear strategic direction to support the Isle of Wight councils' vision whereby everyone living on the Island has a place they can call home. Failure to approve this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy by the winter of 2019 would make the authority non-compliant with legislation and ministerial guidance.

RECOMMENDATION

30. The Cabinet is recommended to approve Option 1 which is to approve the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024, setting out the Council's strategic direction for tackling homelessness, reducing temporary accommodation and eliminating rough sleeping, as at Appendix A to the report.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

31. [Appendix A](#) Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024
32. [Appendix B](#) Equality Impact Assessment

BACKGROUND PAPERS

33. The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy -
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rough-sleeping-strategy>
34. Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 -
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents/enacted>

Contact Point: Jamie Brenchley, Service Manager, Homelessness and Housing Needs, ☎ 821000 e-mail: jamie.brenchley@iow.gov.uk

DR CAROL TOZER
Director of Adult Social Care and
Housing Needs

CLLR CLARE MOSDELL
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public
Health and Housing Needs.