

**FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 5 MARCH  
2024**

**Report of the Head of Strategic Housing: Katie Moore  
Lead Member: Cllr Hamilton**

**Part A**

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

Purpose of Report

To provide a progress update in respect of the development of the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.

Recommendation

To consider the information provided.

Reason

To provide scrutiny of the development of the homelessness and rough sleeping reduction strategy.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

Housing Authorities are required to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and formulate a strategy based on the results of that review at least one every 5 years.

The council's current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Reduction strategy was approved by Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

A new Housing and Rough Sleeping strategy is in the process of being developed and consultation in relation to the strategy is in the process of being carried out.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions

The proposed strategy is due to be considered by Cabinet in April 2024.

Report Implications

**Financial Implications**

There are no specific financial implications relating to this report.

**Risk Management**

There are no specific risks associated with this report.

## Links to the Corporate Strategy

Caring for the Environment	No
Healthy Communities	Yes
A Thriving Economy	No
Your Council	No

Key Decision: No

Background Papers: None

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## Part B

### Background

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced a requirement for housing authorities to carry out a review of homelessness within their district and formulate a strategy based on that results of the review for:

- Preventing homelessness in the district
- Securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the district who are or may become homeless
- Securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in the district who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

Housing authorities must carry out consultation with other relevant agencies when developing their strategies.

Since the previous strategy was developed there have been significant national and local changes that have an impact upon homelessness and related services, for example:

- Changes to the way services are delivered, more home and remote working, more online services
- Changes to the economy, rising interest rates, cost of living and accommodation costs, reduced funding for services
- Changes to asylum and refugee resettlement services.

Due to supply and resource constraints housing authorities are unable to directly provide accommodation for all persons who become homeless within their district. Housing authorities have a statutory duty to provide advice and assistance to all persons who are at risk of becoming homeless to help prevent themselves from becoming homeless and to persons who are already homeless to help resolve their homelessness. Housing authorities have a duty to provide interim accommodation to households who are eligible, homeless and who have a priority need and long-term accommodation to those who meet this criteria and did not become homeless intentionally. Housing authorities work in partnership with other agencies to ensure advice, support and accommodation services can be provided to households with the greatest needs.

### Progress

Progress on the development of the strategy was affected by resource issues within the service. An interim Housing Strategy Manager joined the council in late August 2023. A permanent Housing Needs Manager joined the council in late October 2023.

The following progress on the development of the strategy has since been made:

- A review of national and local changes since the last strategy has been carried out

- A review of homelessness within Charnwood, including data relating to homelessness applications, has been carried out
- Initial discussions have been held with key external partners who provide services for persons who are homeless and rough sleeping
- Potential priorities for the new strategy and related actions have been identified.

The proposed priorities for the new strategy relate to the following:

### **Partnership working**

A range of statutory and voluntary organisations provide advice and support services for persons who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless within Charnwood. Many services are experiencing increased costs and/or reduced funding. Collaborative working will support the delivery of efficient and effective services.

### **Advice and support to prevent the loss of accommodation**

Some types of homelessness can be prevented through the provision of advice and support with addressing issues, such as financial difficulties, disrepair issues, adaptation needs or relationship problems. Some households may not be aware of available services and some may need help to access and engage with services. Early access to advice and support services will give households the best chance of staying in their home.

### **Advice and support to access accommodation**

It is not always possible to prevent households from becoming homeless, for example where persons become homeless due to an emergency such as a fire or flood, have fled domestic abuse or where their accommodation is not suitable for their household. The provision of suitable temporary accommodation can help to reduce the negative affects of homelessness for households whilst they are seeking longer-term accommodation, however can be costly for the household and for the authority so the duration of temporary accommodation placements needs to be minimised. There is a shortage of housing and many groups find it difficult to access suitable affordable accommodation. Some groups, such as those leaving long-term care can find it particularly difficult to access accommodation. The provision of advice and support can assist households to identify accommodation that is suitable for them and the steps that they need to take to secure that accommodation. Housing pathways can be developed for some groups to support them to access accommodation that will be suitable.

### **Advice and support to sustain accommodation**

Some groups need additional support to sustain accommodation, such as young persons who are leaving care, persons who have spent long periods of time living in institutions, persons with a history of rough sleeping. Supported accommodation schemes can assist households to build up the skills they need to sustain an independent tenancy and identify when they are ready to move on to independent accommodation. Floating support services can assist households at the start of their tenancy and at points of crisis during their tenancy. Identifying support needs and encouraging households to access and engage with available support services can help to prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness.

## **Advice and support for rough sleepers**

Rough sleepers often have complex personal situations and needs such as debts, poor credit score, substance misuse, an offending history, or mental or physical health conditions. It can be difficult for rough sleepers to secure and sustain accommodation. Local connection criteria may not be satisfied to join local housing registers and private landlords may be reluctant to accept persons who are unable to demonstrate financial resilience. Entrenched rough sleepers may have difficulty adjusting and meeting the obligations of a tenancy once accommodation is secured. A multi-agency response can assist with identification of rough sleepers and ensuring they are offered advice and support to transition out of homelessness.

### Next steps

Further consultation is being carried out on the priorities and related actions for the strategy. The results of the consultation will be taken into consideration and a final draft of the strategy will be produced. The new strategy is expected to be available for consideration by Cabinet in April 2024.